



PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure.

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Washington's Black Chargers

OR

The Boys Who Fought For Liberty

BY GEN'L JAMES A. GORDON.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAKING OF HISTORY.

When the Congress of the American Colonies, in session at Philadelphia, in 1776, declared that the people of America should be free, men sprang to arms everywhere to sustain the declaration. Companies were formed in every town and village, and the old flintlock rifles of the settlers were the arms they used. Every man molded his own bullets, picked his own flints, provided his own uniform, and stood ready to do his own fighting.

They knew little about military discipline, but did know all about handling rifles. From boyhood they had hunted deer, bear and other game, and the keen crack of their rifles was the doom of the target at which they aimed. The armies of the tyrant were made up of disciplined veterans, clad in the red uniforms of the king, and armed with the best weapons of the time. But the patriots were descendants of the same stock, sturdy, stubborn and mad, and that meant that many were going to be hurt in the impending conflict.

Lexington and Bunker Hill came and passed into history. The British officers awoke to the fact that a foe who feared them not had appeared on the field. They ceased to sneer, and began to war in hedge so as to suffer less at the hands of the patriots. Washington boldly organized an army within sight of the British flag floating over Boston, and when he was ready to begin the siege the haughty Briton was ready to go away—and he went. Washington marched and took possession of the ity, amid the rejoicing of the colonies way down in Virginia and the Carolinas. Everywhere the patriots prepared to do pattle for liberty. The enemy attacked New York City and was repulsed. He attacked Charleston and had to retire.

Then, as the tyrant'sent more armies and ships to crush out the liberties of the people, the fortunes of war varied. New York was captured and held by the redcoats. Battles were fought here, there, and yonder, with victory on one side now, and on the other on the morrow. Finally came the overthrow of Burgoyne at Saratoga, and the surrender of his whole army to Gates, the American commander at that point. How the bells rang throughout the land! How the patriots shouted and thanked God! How they rushed forward to help on the fight spaint the powerful foe! How they bravely suffered and died

for hunger, wounds and cold! A thousand years hence writers of history will still take up the story and pass it on down the ages. As a student of American history, and a faithful chronicler of the deeds of those glorious heroes, it is the duty of the author to tell the story of the Liberty Boys in those dark days, that so tried the souls of men. History is made up of traditions. Tradition is the story told by father to son, and by son to son; of great deeds by men on land and sea. When they are written down, they become the records of history and cease to be tradition. Thus they are preserved as annals of the people, and, as the ages roll on, become the pride and treasures of a nation.

Men are boys before they grow beards. History is filled with names of heroes who were great before their beards began to grow. Patriotism begins in youth, and I am going to tell the young readers of "Pluck and Luck" how the Liberty Boys of the American Revolution fought for Independence under the very eyes of the immortal Washington, who lovingly called them "my black chargers," when he saw them sweep a regiment of British dragoons from the field at a critical moment, when the day was almost lost to the cause of freedom.

Who were the Liberty Boys?

Let the readers of "Pluck and Luck"—boys and girls—follow the thread of this story, and learn how the brave youths and maidens of those days helped to make up the history of a struggle for independence. Maidens! Yes. Those boys had sweethearts and sisters then just as we have them in these peaceful days. And, as in all ages, those maidens stood by their brothers and sweethearts, and urged them on against the tyrant. No other influence is so strong with boy or man as that of the girl he loves.

When the war had been going on for three years it began to look as if the redcoats would beat out the spirit of resistance to the rule of King George. Thousands of men, thinking that the cause of liberty was doomed, turned loyalists, and were known as Tories. They aided the enemy, and sought to restore the authority of the king. In many parts of the country—particularly in the South—they took up arms to aid the British troops in the field. That was a fire in the rear of the patriots—a terrible menace to the families of those patriots in the ranks of the Continental army. Small bands of men went

about the country killing and burning in a way that equaled the savage barbarities of the Indians.

Down on the banks of the James river, in Virginia, lived the family of Colonel Malcolm Bowles, consisting of a wife, daughter and son. The daughter, Myrtle, was eighteen; the son, Harry, was a stout lad of sixteen. The colonel was a big, brawny man of forty, and at the time of which we write, was in command of a regiment in the Continental army, then battling with the enemy up in New Jersey. The family owned many hundred acres of rich lands, and had slaves to till them. A mile farther down the river lived the Widow Rives, who also had a son and daughter. Tom Rives was but seventeen years old, and his sister, Martha, was two years younger. The widow was poor, had but sixty acres of land, but her husband had built a good house on it before he died. The two children had been well educated by the mother, and in that respect were above the average boy and girl of that period.

Naturally the two youths had known each other all their lives, and the two sisters also. But the rich Bowles were not intimate with the poor Rives. Of the two girls, Martha Rives was the prettier. But both were buxom, romping maidens, and had many admirers. Myrtle Bowles, being three years older than Martha, was called Miss Bowles, while Martha, but fifteen years old, was simply Martha Rives.

One day Tom Rives was at work in the barn when Black Ben, a sturdy young negro belonging to the Bowles, came running in, calling out:

"Marse Tom! Marse Tom!"

"Hello! What's the matter, Ben?" Tom answered.

"Fo' de Laud, Marse Tom, de Tories am er-comin' suah!"

"Where are they now?"

"Dey is up at de house an' er-takin' all dey kin lay dar han's on!"

"Up at Colonel Bowles'?"

"Yes, sah—dat's whar dey is."

"How many are they?"

"Nine ob 'em, sah, an' dey is all got dere guns, an' dey done shoot at Marse Harry."

"Thunder! Did they kill him?"

"I dunno, sah. He was out in de fiel' arter a hawk wid his the window and found lodgment in the opposite wall. gun, an' dey shoot at him, an' he tak to de woods."

"Then they didn't kill him."

"But dey is all gone arter 'im, an' missus done tole me ter run down heah an' tole yer erbout it."

"Oh, yes! They are after Harry, then! Well, let's go to the house and see mother about it. They may come here, too," and he led the way to the house. The negro, black as jet, was well known to the mother and daughter as a good-natured, faithful slave. He repeated his story to them, while Tom took down his rifle and proceeded to load it.

"What shall we do, Tom?" Mrs. Rives asked, when she heard the negro's story.

"Fight," said Tom.

"Mercy! We shall all be killed!"

three rifles in the house. You and Martha can load them, and ed into the woods and disappeared from view. I'll do the shooting."

Mrs. Rives was thunderstruck.

Fight nine men! Her boy of but seventeen years fight nine armed men! She paled and trembled at the thought, and was about to protest when Harry Bowles was seen running toward the house from a piece of woods beyond the road.

"Dar's Marse Harry!" cried Ben.

Harry dashed up to the door and Martha opened it for him ere he could knock for admittance.

"Thank you, Martha! Shut the door!" and he turned quickly and helped her secure the faltening. "Ben! you here!"

"Yes, sah! Missus tole me ter run down heah an' tell Marse Tom," said Black Ben.

"Yes, he has told us all about it, Harry," said Tom. "He says there are nine of them, and --- "

"There are but seven now," said Harry, with a determined shake of his head as he examined the priming of his rifle.

"Good!" exclaimed Tom. "Are they coming here?"

"I reckon so-they were following me through the woods."

"Well, we've got four rifles here now. Ben and Martha can load 'em for us."

During that short, hurried talk, Martha Rives stood by and listened. She understood well the meaning of Harry Bowles' words.

"There are but seven now."

She knew he had shot two of them—and he but sixteen years old!

"Oh, mercy!" gasped Mrs. Rives at the window. "There they are, coming out of the woods!" and she turned away to pace the floor and wring her hands. But Martha coolly stepped to the window, looked out and counted seven men, who looked like ordinary Virginia farmers.

"Yes, there's seven of them," she said. "Mr. Tillman is with them."

"Ah! The worst Tory in the county!" said Tom, going to the window, too, to peer out at them. "They are at the gate. Let's drop two of them there, Harry!"

Harry stepped to the window, gazed at the seven men in cool silence for a few brief moments, and then quickly raised his old squirrel rifle and fired. Tom followed just a second or two later.

Mrs. Rives screamed in terror and ran into a bedroom, and fell on her knees.

"De Lawd sabe us!" exclaimed Black Ben. "Dar's two ob dem down on de groun'."

"Here! Load this gun, Ben!" said Tom, handing his smoking rifle to the black and taking up another.

"Give me yours, Harry," said Martha, reaching out and taking the rifle from his hand. Both proceeded at once to reload the pieces.

C-r-rack! The Tories fired, and five bullets crashed through

"Now, Harry!" said Tom, and both stepped to the window and fired again.

"Two more down!" said Harry, as he waited for his rifle, which Martha was reloading.

"And only three left," added Tom, as he took the rifle Black Ben handed to him.

The negro had loaded quickly. He was more expert at it than was Martha.

"They are going back, Harry," said Tom.

"Don't let 'em!" and Harry snatched the rifle from Martha's hand and poured the priming into the pan himself. In another moment he and Tom were at the window. The three men were now out in the road, making for the shelter of the woods.

Crack! Crack! Both rifles cracked keenly on the balmy "Well, aren't they hunting Harry to kill him? We have air of the afternoon, and two more men fell. The other dash-

CHAPTER II.

BLACK BEN ON GUARD.

"Quick! Don't let that man get away!" cried Harry Bowles. looking around to see if another rifle had been reloaded.

Tom Rives dashed to the door and opened it. Harry and he both ran out, Black Ben close at their heels.

"Come, Harry!" called Ton: "Let's catch him!" and both made for the gate at full speed. They passed the dead and wounded Tories lying on the ground inside the gate

"Stay here, Ben, till we come back!" called out Harry to the

black, and Ben stopped at the gate and resumed loading the rifle which had been handed to him in the house.

Near him lay the dead Tories, and a little farther away were three others wounded, one of whom was dying. The latter looked toward the black and asked for water.

"I ain't got no water, sah," said Ben, "an' my young marsa done tole me fo' ter stay heah till he done come back."

The faithful fellow knew nothing but to obey, like a watchdog.

"Water! Give me water!" groaned the man, and he was heard by the mother and daughter in the house. A few minutes later the door opened, and both came running out, each with a glass of water in her hand.

"Oh, I'm so sorry this has happened!" cried Mrs. Rives, kneeling by the dying man and placing the glass to his lips. He drank every drop of it, gave a great groan, and closed nis eyes. In another moment he was dead.

Martha had given another the glass of water she brought out, and as soon as she received back the empty glass she ran to the house to refill it.

"Are you much hurt, sir?" Mrs. Rives asked the man who had just swallowed the water Martha gave him.

"Yes—I am shot through the shoulder, and don't know why I was shot, either."

"I am sorry, sir. Can you walk to the house and let me dress your wound?"

"I reckon I am past help," and he groaned in an agony of pain.

"Ben there can help you, sir," she said.

"Lemme knock him in de head, missus," said the black.

"He done go up ter my missus an' say he gwine ter burn de house up an' shoot Marse Harry."

"Oh, dear! is that true?" and she looked at the wounded man with an expression of horror on her face.

"I done see um wid my own eyes, missus," said Black Ben.

"He's a nigger," said the Tory.

"Why did you follow Harry Bowles here?" she asked. "What had he done?"

"He is a rebel viper," said the other wounded man, laying off on her right.

"Why, he is but a boy! He has never been in the army."

"He is a young rebel—his father is a traitor," said the Tory. Mrs. Rives could not argue with him, but did want to relieve his sufferings. She again begged them both to let Ben assist them into the house so she could dress their wounds. They consented, and Ben, under her orders, took one of them up in his brawny arms and bore him to the house. She had him placed on a lounge while Ben went back for the other one.

"Send for a doctor," said the second one as he was laid on a bed, and Mrs. Rives told Ben to saddle a horse and ride down the river road for Dr. Holmes.

"Missus, Marse Harry done tole me ter stay heah till he come back," said Ben.

"Saddle the horse and I will go," put in Martha.

"I am afraid for you to go, child," interposed her mother.

"Well, I am not afraid," returned Martha.

Ben ran round to the barn and saddled one of two horses he found there. The one he caught was a magnificent black, the pride and pet of Tom Rives. Martha was assisted into the saddle, and the next moment she was off like the wind.

She was gone but a few minutes when Harry and Tom emerged from the woods. They found Black Ben at the gate. He told them where Martha had gone, and they hurried into the house.

"The fellow got away," Tom said, as soon as he entered.
"So you two are wounded for warring on women and children."

"And you'll be hanged for shooting kingsmen," said one of the men, who was a reckless sort of fellow. "Are you a king's soldier?" Tom asked him.

"No, but I am a kingsman."

"Does being a kingsman give you any rght to rob, burn and otherwise harass other people?"

"Yes, when they are rebels and traitors," was the reply.

"Well, you see that 'rebels and traitors' object to it, don't you?"

"Oh, just wait a few days and you won't object to it. You will all be hanged."

"Well, they will have to do some pretty good fighting before they get us. Harry, come outside a moment. I want to see you," and the two boys went out of the house and walked off toward the barn, arm in arm.

"You have negroes up at your home whom you can send out in different directions for help. You must go back, and write a note, or several of them, detailing what has happened, and send them out on the three roads to be shown to the boys. That Tory who got away will go after his people and come back here to burn us out—your home and ours. There's enough boys along the river to beat them back, if they will come. If they don't we are doomed. No time must be lost, either. Then send down three or four hands with a wagon to take those bodies away and bury them. I am a boy no longer. From now on we must defend our homes or lose them. Our mothers and sisters have nobody but us to defend them, and we must do it."

Harry grasped his hand and said, as he wrung it:

"And we'll do it, Tom, to the very last."

"Yes—we've got to, Harry. Now, hurry home and send the call out as quick as you can."

Harry hurried away and Tom proceeded to gather up the arms of the Tories, take them into the house and store them in his bedroom. When that was done he went out again to talk to Black Ben, who was still at the gate. While there he saw two men ride up. Both were old farmers, old patriots, whom he knew.

"In the name of Heaven, what does this mean, Tom?" one of the farmers asked on seeing the dead Tories lying where they had fallen.

"It means that the war has come to our door," replied Tom, who then told the story of the tragedy. Both the old men paled. They were both too old to go into the army. They each had sons with Washington.

"Has it come to this that our very neighbors must go to slaying each other?" one exclaimed.

"It looks like it," said Tom.

"And you and Harry Bowles beat seven men?"

"Yes—we had to. We were in the house, where they could not hit us."

"And you say Tillman was one of them?"

"Yes, and he got away."

"Well, well! We are going to have trouble sure enough."

"Yes; but the only way to remedy it is to kill 'em as fast as they come," said Tom, shaking his head significantly. "If we don't they will kill us and burn down our homes. I'm glad you came by. You can tell the boys to come here right away and bring their guns. Tillman will get his friends and come back here for revenge. If we beat 'em they'll hurry away, but if they beat us then every patriot family along the river will suffer."

"Yes, yes—that's so," sighed the old man. "The Lord help us," and then the two rode away.

Half an hour later a wagon and three negroes from the Bowles place drew up at the gate. Harry had sent them, at Tom's request, to bury the dead Tories.

"Take them down to the creek," said Tom, "and bury them in the woods on the left of the road on the other side, near the

old beech tree. You can have whatever you find in their pockets, dividing it equally between you."

In ten minutes the bodies were in the wagon, and the blacks drove away in the direction of the creek. Tom went to the house to be with his mother, and, a little later, Martha returned, accompanied by old Doctor Holmes.

The doctor was a stanch patriot, and he lost no time in telling the two wounded men what he thought of them, and what ought to be done with them. One of them retorted in kind, saying he had as much right to support the king as anyone else to go into rebellion.

"You are right," said the doctor, "but the mistake you have made is in not joining the king's army. If a soldier shoots and kills it's in the line of his duty; when men who are not soldiers do so they are murderers, criminals, and must be tried and punished as such. Now, let me look at your hurts and see how well those two boys did their duty," and he proceeded to examine their wounds. He was quite skilled in his profession, and soon got the bullets out. Both groaned loudly under the operation, but were quiet when it was over with. By that time two boys about sixteen years old rode up, each on a black horse, and armed with squirrel rifles.

Tom ran out to meet them, and they dismounted and shook hands with him. They were Jim Owens and Joe Bledsoe, who lived three miles below on the river road. Of course, they were in a state of mind over what had happened, and had many questions to ask. Old Doctor Holmes came out and said to them:

"Stand together, boys, or we'll all be at the mercy of the Tories."

CHAPTER III.

THE LIBERTY BOYS.

When young Harry Bowles reached home, after leaving the Rives place, his mother and sister were relieved of the horrible fear of his death. They knew the entire party of nine Tories had gone in pursuit of him because he had shot and wounded one of their number.

"They will return and kill you," said his mother. "You must go over the river to your Aunt Mary, and stay there till——"

"No need of that, mother," he said, interrupting her. "They can't come back, for six of 'em are dead, and two are wounded and prisoners."

"Mercy on me, Harry! What do you mean?" his mother exclaimed, and then he told her what had happened down at the Rives place. Of course she was horrorstruck at the recital.

"And did Tom help you that way, brother?" Myrtle asked.

"Yes, and Martha stood by and loaded my rifle for me. She's as brave as any old soldier—didn't ever show any fear at all."

"They are chilren of a brave man," said Mrs. Bowles. "When their father was a youth he fought and slew three Indians over on the Pamunky river. I remember it well. But what are we to do now? The Tories won't rest till they have punished you and Tom."

"I am going to send for all the boys up and down the river, on both sides, and if they come we'll settle it once for all with the kingsmen."

"But their parents won't let them come. They will be as uneasy as we are."

"Well, we'll find out, anyhow," and then he asked Myrtle to write several notes for messengers to carry, while he went out and saw about a wagon and three negroes being sent down to the Rives place.

When he returned to the house Myrtle had the notes ready, written in a clear round hand, to which she had signed her own name.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "You have signed your name to it."
"Ye. You are but a boy, and their mothers might object

to their coming. If a young lady calls for help everybody will try to help."

"Say, sis," he laughed, "put on breeches and join us."

"I will if it becomes necessary," she replied.

"Good! Don't let Martha Rives show more pluck than you do."

"I am the daughter of a soldier," she remarked.

"And the sister of a brave boy," said the mother.

"Yes, yes," and Myrtle's eyes flashed as she looked at Harry.

The messengers were mounted on fleet horses, and sent off in

great haste with the notes. Myrtle was right. A young lady's appeal for help touched the heart of every boy who got it.

They ran to the stables, saddled their horses, took down their rifles and powder horns, and dashed away to her defense.

By the time the stars came out, about forty boys arrived. Harry had their horses fed, and a supper prepared for them, after which they rode down to the Rives place, where ten more boys had assembled. Tom and Martha ran out to the gate to see them in the clear moonlight. The boys had been told by Harry how she stood by him and loaded his rifle during the fight.

"Hooray for Martha Rives!" sung out one of the boys, and everyone yelled at the top of his voice.

Martha was astonished, but in a moment she recovered and called out:

"Hooray for the Liberty Boys!"

They cheered again, and then Harry exclaimed:

"That's our name, boys! Let's adopt that name!"

"It's a good one!" sung out another. "Let's have it!"

"Yes—yes—let's have it!" the whole crowd yelled.

"Boys, dismount and tie your horses to the limbs over there on the other side of the road," sung out Tom. "We must make up our minds what we are to do."

The boys dismounted, and the negro, Black Ben, built a fire on the lawn in front of the house. They gathered around it, making a picturesque group with their rifles in their hands and coonskin caps on their heads.

"Boys," said Tom, "listen to me a few moments while I tell you the situation as it exists at this moment. This thing has come upon us most unexpectedly. Our fathers, and all other patriots who were able to go, are with Washington in the Continental army, and we are all that's left to defend our homes. mothers, sisters and sweethearts—"

"And we'll do it, too!" exclaimed little Billy Dunham.

"Yes-yes!" cried everyone.

"The kingsmen," continued Tom, "thinking that Washington cannot spare any soldiers to protect us, have suddenly turned up to plunder and burn us out. They now say, those two wounded men in the house there, that we are doomed—that the kingsmen will come down upon us and sweep us from the face of the earth. It is for you to say to-night that they shall not do it. Shall we organize, stand together and send word to our fathers that our mothers and sisters are safe as long as we can mold bullets and shoot them?"

"Yes, yes!" they yelled, wrought up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.

"Then elect a captain and lieutenants at once. They will come back for revenge as soon as they can gather a force. We must be ready for them when they do. Whom do you want to be your leader?"

"Tom Rives!" they sung out as with one voice.

"I'll serve under anyone you choose," Tom said. "If you want me to lead you, hold up your right hands."

Everybody held up his right hand.

"Very well, boys," he said. "I won't take it unless you swear to obey orders. Hold up your hands again and swear to obey the orders of your captain."

"We swear!" they sung out.

"Very well. Shall we take the name of the Liberty Boys?"

"Yes-yes! Hooray for blue eyes!"

The boys cheered, and Martha blushed and laughed.

"So be it. Now, we'll elect two lieutenants," and Harry Bowles and Jim Owens were elected. Joe Bledsoe was made sergeant.

"Now, boys, we can't have uniforms, but I think our coonskin caps and black horses are uniform enough. Over half of us have black horses. The other half can swap and trade around till they get them. What say you to that?"

They agreed to it, and thus the organization was completed.

"Now, Lieutenant Bowles, take half the command and go into camp up at your home. The other half will stay here. We can thus guard both places at once. To-morrow we'll try to get into some sort of shape so as to act together in the hour of danger. Let everyone see that his rifle is in good order, and bullets and powder ready for instant use."

Then the party divided, and one-half went up to the Bowles place. The other went into camp near the Rives house.

All this was done within hearing of the two wounded Tories in the house. The one who had been most reckless in his threats of what the kingsmen would do, laughed and said:

"They talk big now, but when a few of them are knocked over the rest will all run home and hide under the bed."

"I don't know whether they will or not," said the other.
"But I do know that they know how to shoot as well as we do, and that they are no cowards. Young Rives made a good talk and seems to know what he is talking about."

"Oh, he is smart enough, but a boy company can't stand against a company of men. It don't stand to reason."

The next day Mrs. Bowles ordered two sheep and a shoat slaughtered for the boys, so they feasted well, and then set about drilling. An old one-legged soldier who had served under Washington with Braddock gave them lessons which they did not forget.

By noon that day twenty more joined them, making seventy in all. Tom sent all those who did not have black horses out through the country in quest of horses of that color, telling them to exchange or borrow. Inside of two days everyone had a black horse.

Then they drilled hard for two more days. On Saturday half a hundred people, mostly their mothers and sisters, came to see them. They stood on the piazza of the Bowles mansion as the boys rode by, and the sight was inspiring. They were cheered to the echo.

Suddenly Black Ben, who was in the crowd of spectators on the roadside, where a motley crowd of men stood, sung out: "Heah's er spy!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE SPY AND WHAT FOLLOWED HIS CAPTURE.

At the sudden exclamation of Black Ben every boy reined up his horse, and looked around at him. He was confronting a white man, who was threatening to kill him. Tom spurred his horse up to them, and asked:

"Who is a spy here?"

"Dis heah man, sah!" said Ben, pointing to the man in front of him.

"What do you mean, you blasted nigger!" cried the man, aiming a vicious blow at him. Ben dodged the blow, for he was quick as a flash of lightning.

"Hold on there!" called out Tom, in a tone of voice that startled everyone.

The man looked up at him, and asked:

"Is he your nigger?"

"No, nor is he yours. Who are you, and where do you live?" and Tom dismounted.

"My name is Holden, and I live over the river."

"I've lived here all my life," said Tom, "but I never saw you before. What are you doing over here?"

"I am going down the river, but don't know that it's any business of yours."

"I know 'im, cap'in," said one of the boys. "He lives over the river—out beyond Deer Creek."

Everyone knew that there was a settlement of kingsmen over on Deer Creek.

"Is he a patriot?" Tom asked.

"I don't know," was the reply.

"He's a kingsman," sung out an old farmer in the crowd.

"I am not," said Holden.

"Why did you say he was a spy, Ben?" Tom asked of the black accuser.

"Kase I done heah 'im say 'Lawd, but de kingsmen will wallop dem fool boys,' an' he sayed it sorter low to hisself, sah. I knowed he lib ober dar by Deer Creek, an' dey's all Tories ober dar."

"That's proof enough," said Tom. "You can go, sir, and tell your friends what you have seen here. If you think they can wallop us, you had better come back with them and see them do it."

"I didn't say it," protested Holden.

"I don't believe you. You had better go. Don't forget that we boys are here to defend our homes. If anybody who is not a soldier comes over to molest peaceful families he will be treated as a criminal when caught. If a house is burned the man who put the torch to it will be hanged, if caught. Now go."

Without a word the man turned and went off down the road. The boys cheered Tom.

"Why did you let him go?" Harry Bowles asked.

"Because we had no right to hold him when he had done nothing."

"But he is a spy."

"Maybe so, but we have no proof of it. We don't want to do anything that would look like a wrong."

"Well, you want to keep your eyes open for spies."

"That's what we are going to try to do, sir," Tom remarked.

"And now let me ask you all to send in some provisions for us. It is not fair that Mrs. Bowles should have to feed us. We get no pay and don't want any, but must have something to eat while we are protecting our homes. When you go home don't forget to send in live stock and bread, with provender for our horses."

The farmers went home after an hour or two, and the boys went into camp in the woods between the Bowles and Rives places. Tom then sent out three scouts on each road, making a dozen in all, saying to them:

"Keep your eyes and ears open; get all the news you can and send it in. We want to be ready for the Tories when they come."

The boys went away, and Tom turned his attention to the discipline of the company.

While he was thus engaged, Martha and Myrtle appeared on the scene. The boys cheered them, but Martha was their favorite, for she had been under fire and showed no fear.

Myrtle, aristocratic and older, did not relish the partiality shown the young girl. But Tom showed her so much attention she was mollified in a measure. She had always been disposed to look upon him as poor white trash, because the Rives owned no slaves. Yet both Tom and Martha were as well educated as she. The boys, though, had no such ideas themselves, as they knew him to be brave, honest and sensible.

"Your presence encourages the boys, Miss Bowles," Tom said to her, "and I hope you will let them see you here as often as possible. I am sure they feel just as their fathers in the army do—able to meet the enemy man to man."

"Oh, I wish I were a man, too, that I might join you boys,"

she said. "I know they are not afraid, for they can all shoot as well as the older men can."

"I am glad you are not a man," returned Tom. "You have more influence as a woman. Our boys would die in defense of their mothers, sisters, and sweethearts."

"Oh, I don't think any of them have any sweethearts," she laughed. "They are nearly all too young to give any thought to the girls."

"About half of them are as old as you or me, and I am sure we are not too young to love."

"Are you in love with any girl?" she asked him.

"No—unless it be my mother," he laughed. "I know I love her."

"And me," said Martha, who was by his side.

"Yes, but I didn't think it necessary to say so," he laughed.

"Oh, all the boys seem to be in love with her," remarked Myrtle.

"No more than with you," he said. "She is but a girl, while you are a young lady whom they dare not be familiar with. If you should get into a battle with us some day they would all worship you."

She laughed and blushed, and moved over to where her brother Harry was talking with a group of boys.

Several days passed, and other boys came in and joined the company. Everyone had his coonskin cap and black horse, and was eager to get a shot at the enemy.

One day one of the scouts came in at full speed with the news that a band of Tories was on the way from the county below, led by several British officers.

"How many did you see?" Tom asked him.

"I didn't see 'em at all. Jim saw 'em, and said there was at least a hundred of 'em."

"How far away were they when he saw them?"

"They were at Bell's store."

"That's twelve miles from here. They will probably wait there for more men. We must meet them there and not have them come here," and, after detailing ten of the boys to remain on guard at his home and the Bowles place, he ordered the boys to mount.

They sprang into their saddles with an astonishing eagerness, and were off like a whirlwind.

"Where are they going?" Myrtle Bowles asked of the corporal in charge of the guard left behind.

"I don't know," was the reply. "One of the scouts came in and told the captain something, and he at once told them to mount."

"Have you heard of any Tories being about?"

"No, not one."

"What if they should come here before our boys get back?"

"There are ten of us here. We'd give 'em a fight."

"Ten of you?"

"Yes."

"And you might have to fight fifty or one hundred!"

"Well, wo'd fight 'em," said the corporal.

She was puzzled, and mentally scolded Tom Rives for not telling her where he had gone. She knew little about war and the wisdom of silence about military movements.

In less than two hours the Liberty Boys were within a mile of Bell's store, a well-known cross-roads trading place. Tom halted them in the woods, and sent two of the scouts forward to see what the Tories were doing, and how placed. The scouts soon returned and reported that about eighty or ninety Tories, led by British officers, were encamped in the grove back of the store, and, at that moment, engaged in cooking their dinner. The four British officers were at the store, ordering thing, about as if they owned the earth.

In a little while some of the boys caught a negro who had

passed the store, and he told Tom the Tories were going to wait there for more men who were to be there that night.

"We won't wait till night to attack 'em, then," said Tom. "Now, Harry, you take half the boys and get into that woods on the right of the road, on the rise this side of the store, about a quarter of a mile. I'll take the other half and go down the road and open fire on 'em. They will return it, and we'll pretend to retreat. They'll come tearing after us, and so when they are well in your front, mow 'em down. They'll shy off into that field, where we can have a good view of them. Then we'll turn, and, if we aim well before firing, we'll get nearly all of them."

They soon had all the plan well in hand, and Harry had his boys, forty in number, well hidden in the woods when Tom, at the head of forty more, went dashing down toward the store. The Tories were standing about in little groups, some in the grove where dinner was cooking, and others near the well where the water supply came from. But the greater number were in or about the store. The red uniform of England was seen on two officers in front of the store.

When the clatter of the horses' hoofs on the road reached them, the Tories thought the newcomers were the men they were waiting for, and set up a welcoming cheer. Others were suspicious of the black horses, for they had heard that the Liberty Boys all rode black steeds.

Suddenly one of the redcoat officers sung out:

"To arms, men! They are rebels!" and the men made a break for their rifles, which were stacked against the trees in the grove.

"Halt!" cried Tom Rives, and the forty boys reined up instantly. "Let everyone make sure of his aim! Let 'em have it—now!" and he raised his rifle and fired at a Tory who was running at full speed for his gun.

Then a rolling fire followed from the boys, and men dropped all about the place. Half a dozen went down in front of the store, and a redcoat was seen to stagger inside the house. A few moments later the Tories began to fire scatteringly from behind the trees.

"Back, boys!" cried Tom, and they wheeled and fled up the hill, two of their number being slightly wounded.

"To horse, men, and ride 'em down!" yelled a redcoat officer, and the Tories ran to their horses and sprang into the saddles.

CHAPTER V.

OTHE VICTORY BY FIRE.

When he reached the top of the hill Tom halted, and the boys reloaded their rifles. They were in plain view of the Tories, who came charging up the hill, led by a redcoat officer.

"Fall back, boys, and let Harry have a chance at 'em! Keep cool, and don't fire without orders!" and they turned and rode away at a brisk trot. The Tories came on, yelling like demons.

When about half of them had passed, Harry gave the order to fire. They were within fifty feet of them, and the old squirrel rifles emptied many a saddle, cutting the column in two. Those who had passed the spot turned and looked back in great astonishment. They at once surmised an ambush, and wheeled into the old field to get away from it—just what Tom had planned for.

"Now, let 'em have it again, boys!" he cried, and they began picking them off. They dropped off their horses so fast they became demoralized and careered round to the farther edge of the field in an attempt to get back to those behind. The latter, fearing an ambush, retreated back toward the store. Harry and his boys dashed out into the road and peppered them with deadly effect, causing them to break for the store, every man for himself.

"Charge, boys!" cried Tom, and those with Harry ran for-

ward on foot while Tom's party rode at full speed and got between the party in the field and those at the store. How the rifles cracked at those still in the saddle! The latter, reduced to a mere handful, dashed off across country and left those in the store to their fate—about twenty in number.

"Now we've got 'em hemmed up in there," said Tom, but it won't do to try to get in ourselves; we'll get the worst of it if we do. I'll call for a surrender," and he did so at the top of his voice.

"Come and take us!" came back at him from the store, followed by two bullets that whistled close by his head.

"All right. Here, Black Ben! Do you see that wagon load of hay out there under that tree?"

"Yes, sah," said the black.

"Well, there are no windows or doors on the side of the house next to it; go and run it up against the house and set it on fire."

"De Lawd sabe us!" gasped the black, who knew it was a crime to burn a house.

"Hurry up—quick!" said Tom, and the faithful fellow started off to do his bidding.

"Lieutenant Bowles! Lead your men round into that grove so as to pick off the men who try to escape by the back door." Harry quickly obeyed.

A few defiant shots came from the store door and the windows in front, and one of the Liberty Boys tumbled from his horse. Another was hit.

"Steady, boys!" called out Tom. "We'll soon have them out of there!"

Black Ben, aided by two of the boys, ran the load of hay up against the side of the house. Then he ran to one of the campfires, got a blazing chunk and darted back with it. In another moment the hay was ablaze. The flames rose as high as the roof against the old frame building. Those inside heard the roaring and crackling blaze, and the storekeeper ran out, wringing his hands and crying out:

"Don't burn my house! Oh, don't do that! I have taken no side in the war!"

Tom said nothing in reply. It was too late. He was taking good care that none inside escaped death or capture. The storekeeper undertook to pull the wagon away, but it was too hot for him, and he had to give it up. The dry pine timbers caught fire and the store was doomed. As the flames rose several men attempted to escape by the rear door, but were picked off by Harry's boys in the grove.

Suddenly a white handkerchief tied to a ramrod was thrust out of the door.

"Well, come out with it!" called out Tom, as he sat erect on his horse, rifle in hand.

A British lieutenant of dragoons came out, and said:

"I will surrender on condition that we be permitted to leave with our arms and horses."

"You can't do that," said Tom. "You will surrender without any conditions, or die by bullets or fire!"

"So be it—we surrender," said the Briton, "in the hope of saving this poor man's property."

"Bring out your men, then, and be quick about it!"

They ran out and laid down their arms—twenty-one of them.

"Now, see if you can save anything from the fire," said Tom. "The man who tries to escape will be shot down!"

The Tories, under the leadership of the officer, tried to save the house, but without avail. They could get no water save from the well.

"Save the goods!" sung out Tom, and they succeeded in bringing out about half the stock. Bell, the storekeeper, was nearly crazed with grief over his loss. He ran to Tom and ealled out:

"Who is to pay for this? I am ruined and have done no man any wrong."

"What are you—a kingsman!" Tom asked.

"No-I have taken no side in this war at all."

"You don't care which side wins then?" Tom asked.

"I didn't say that."

"Well, if you are a kingsman look to the king for your pay. If you are a loyal patriot look to the Continental Congress for redress. If the enemies of your country make a fort of your house and it is destroyed in battle you must look to them for redress."

Suddenly some kegs of powder in the store blew up, and the wreck was complete.

Tom found that he had twenty-one prisoners, four of whom were British officers—one a captain who was wounded. About thirty men were killed and as many more wounded. About fifteen or twenty got away.

"Who are you, sir?" Tom asked of the lieutenant who had surrendered.

"I am Lieutenant Ferris, of the British army. Who are you and to what command do you belong?"

"I am Captain Rives of the Liberty Boys, and this is my command," and he looked around at the brave boys on their black steeds.

"Do you belong to the rebel army?"

"We don't belong to any army but our own little army, such as you see here. We are simply here to look after you and your captain?"

"Captain Mayfair! He is wounded. He is out there under that tree."

"Sorry he is hurt. We'll see what can be done for him. Lieutenant Bowles, see that the prisoners are guarded, and gather the arms and horses. Come, lieutenant, let's look after the captain," and Tom strode forward to where the wounded captain lay on the grass under a big oak. He was badly hurt, being shot through the chest.

"I am sorry you are hurt, sir," Tom said to him.

"So am I," replied the captain. "I fear it's all over with me. But I am willing to die for my king."

"I am equally as willing to die for my country, but I hope I may live to serve her as long as an enemy's foot in on her soil. I never strike an enemy' when he is down, though, so if you can tell me what I can do for your comfort, I shall gladly do it—if in my power."

"I have no surgeon with me. If a physician can be procured I would like to see him."

"I don't know where one can be found in this locality, but will see if the storekeeper knows," and he sent two of the Liberty Boys in quest of Bell. They brought him back. He said a physician lived but a quarter of a mile away. A man was sent for him. But before he arrived the captain was dead.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM'S SPEECH TO THE BOYS.

Three of the boys were wounded and one killed in the fight at Bell's store. Though elated over their victory the death of their young comrade was keenly felt by them. They buried him in a quiet corner of the field, near where he fell, and raised a stone heap to mark the spot. The prisoners were made to bury their dead.

The body of the British captain was to be buried by the Tories with military honors. Lieutenant Ferris, trying to do, it secretly, was seen to remove a money belt from next to the body.

"You must give up that, sir," said Tom, when one of the boys told him about it.

"It is private property," said the officer.

"Maybe it is, but it is ours all the same," and he took it away from him.

"Ah! It's very heavy! It is gold to be used in the king's cause! It is public property after all. Have you one on, too?"

"You must be searched."

"I protest! 'It is an outrage! I am a prisoner of war."

"Yes, but you were leading men who don't belong to any army."

"Neither do you," was the retort.

"So we are even."

It was found that each officer had three thousand dollars in gold on him-money to pay the Tories for organizing to burn and slay throughout the settlement. Tom said it should go to pay the expenses of the Liberty Boys in protecting their homes.

Bell heard of it, and at once put in a claim for two thousand dollars for the loss of his store and stock.

"I am willing to help you out, sir," Tom said to him. "Take horses enough to cover your losses. I won't pay you any of the gold."

"But what can I do with so many horses? I can't feed so many."

"Take them up the river and sell them. You can get more for them than you have lost."

"I ought to have more."

"Why should you have anything at all, sir?" Tom asked.

"Because there was no excuse for doing as you did. You had no right to set my house on fire."

"Oh, well, if that's the view you take of it you won't get a cent. I am satisfied you are a kingsman, Mr. Bell," and with that Tom turned away to look after the comfort and safety of the boys.

He procured a wagon, put straw in it, and had the three wounded boys placed in it, and sent it away under guard.

"Now we'll wait here for the reinforcement of Tories that was to be here to-night. They may hear of the battle and keep away, but we'll have to risk that."

"They'll be sure to hear of it," said Harry, "for such news flies fast through the country."

"Yes, I know that, but maybe they may think they can give us a night attack and thus repay us."

"Then we must be on the lookout for them."

"Yes, of course. We'll keep the campfires burning all night, but we'll lie in the wood and wait for them, with guards out in every direction. I want to talk to the boys a few minutes," and he called them around him. They were soon drawn up in array, every face turned to him. N-100 Carl

"Liberty Boys," he exclaimed, "we have won our first battle with the enemies of our country. Our home, our mothers, sisters and sweethearts are safe for the time being, and our fathers who are with Washington beyond the Potomac can fight all the better when they hear of it. Now that we have taken up arms in defense of our homes and country, we will not be permitted to lay them down again till the enemy has been driven from our shores. Enraged at being beaten by a company of boys, the enemy, redcoats and Tories, will seek to crush us, and, unless we stand together and obey orders, they will succeed. We have won this fight only by a strict obedience to every order given you. We have captured about one hundred horses, with as many stand of arms, and twenty-one prisoners. The number of the enemy slain and wounded proves that you know how to fight as well as men who have beards. We know that defeat means ruin and death to us, and all we hold dear in life. I want very one of you to feel that you are fighting for your lives, and that you cannot afford to throw away a single bullet. Never shoot till you have aimed true to saved me!" and she ran at Tom, who was the nearest one to

War means death and destruction. The quickest way to whip the enemy is to kill him and bury him. The grave is all the foothold we can afford to let him have in our country, and we let him have that much solely because we knew he'll be quiet there and fight no more. Now, let's give three cheers for Washington and the Continental Congress!"

Three cheers were given with a vengeance, for the speech had wrought the boys up to a high pitch of enthusiasm.

"That young man is a born soldier," said Lieutenant Ferris, to those about him. He had heard every word of the speech, and was amazed at it.

After the prisoners were properly disposed of for the night, and the arrangements made for the reception of the Tories who were expected to come, Tom demanded the swords of the four captured British officers. He got them, and gave them to his lieutenants, taking the captain's sword for his own use.

Soon after the speech, Bell, the storekeeper, again went to Tom to plead for pay for his losses.

"Not one cent, sir," said Tom.

"But I'll take the horses."

"Not a single horse. I am satisfied you are a kingsman—or, at least, care nothing for your country. I offered you the horses once, but you didn't talk like a patriot. You overreached yourself, sir."

Bell begged hard, but Tom was immovable. The man had no family, so no one but himself suffered. He had a rich farm around his store, and was, in fact, a rich man.

Tom was talking to him when a youth on a black horse was seen dashing down the hill at full speed. The horse was covered with foam. The rider dashed into camp, crying out:

"The Tories are besieging our boys on the Bowles place!" Instantly Tom sung out:

"Liberty Boys! Mount and to the rescue!"

CHAPTER VII.

"WE RODE LIKE THE WIND TO YOUR RESCUE!"

Never did soldiers mount as quickly as did the Liberty Boys when Tom Rives gave the order to go to the rescue of their comrades. In five minutes they were ready to go. Tom asked the scout, or courier, a few questions, and found out that the Tories who expected to go to Bell's store had turned and gone down the river road.

"Then they had heard of the battle here," he said. "We can take our prisoners along under guard," and he detailed twenty boys to follow with the horses, arms, and prisoners.

That done, he led the way in a headlong gallop up the road, with the rest behind him.

In a little more than one hour he was within half a mile of the Bowles place. He halted and listened. Rifle shots were heard.

"They are at it," he said. "Dismount and tie your horses, boys. We'll creep up on foot and give those traitors a lesson they won't forget soon!"

But five minutes were spent in securing the horses in the woods. Twenty minutes more they were in the woods near the mansion, and took in the situation. The boys were in the house peppering away at the Tories in the moonlight. Suddenly Tom gave the order to fire, and the Tories went down all round the house. They tried to fly, but the boys had them surrounded, so, in a panic they threw down their arms and cried for quarter. But the boys gave them another volley, and but few of them escaped. Those who did not succeed in getting away laid down and yelled for quarter.

"Oh, it's the Liberty Boys!" eried Myrtle Bowles, flinging open the door and rushing out on the piazza. "Oh, you have the mark, for you will then have one bullet less sent after you. her, and threw her arms about his neck. She did not know

who he was under the shadow of the house. Tom kissed her, and said:

"We rode like the wind to your rescue!"

"Oh, is it you, Tom?"

"Yes. Any of you hurt?"

"Two of the brave boys are hit."

"Boys," sung out the sergeant, as he ran out on the porch, "Myrtle Bowles stood with us and fought like an old soldier for three hours. Three cheers for her!"

They made the welkin ring with their cheers.

"Are they safe down at my home?" Tom asked of the sergeant.

"I don't know. We were forced to take refuge in the house here."

"Lieutenant Bledsoe, get twenty men together quick and come with me."

"They are ready now, captain."

"Forward—march!" and they started off down the road at a run. They soon came in sight of the house. Not a light was to be seen. Tom gave a halloo, and another came back from Martha.

"Thank mercy, they are safe!" he gasped. "All's well, Martha."

She dashed out of the house, rifle in hand, and ran to meet him. He caught her in his arms and kissed her, saying:

"You brave little girl! Were you going to defend yourself all alone?"

"Yes, for there was no one to help me. I heard the fighting going on up at the Bowles place. Are they all safe up there?"

"Yes, and the yard is full of dead Tories. We have won two battles to-day," and he ran into the house to see and embrace his mother. He found her almost overcome with the excitement. But she soon braced up when she heard the news.

Martha procured lights, and when she saw him with the sash and sword of the British officer, she exclaimed:

"Where did you get that sword, brother?"

"Won it in battle," and he told the story of the battle at Bell's store, and the fight up at the Bowles place. The two wounded Tories in the next room heard every word of it. One groaned and said to the other:

"Did you hear that?"

"Yes, but I don't believe a word of it."

"But he has a sword!"

"Oh, that doesn't mean anything. I don't believe all I hear."

"But how could they be here if they did not beat our people up there? We don't hear any more fighting up that way."

"I don't know. We'll have to wait till we can find out more about it. That's all we can do."

"Yes, that's all," and then they lay there and listened. They soon heard enough to convince them that the Liberty Boys had utterly routed the kingsmen at both places. They heard the boys telling Martha how Myrtle Bowles had fought with them for three hours, loading and firing her rifle like an old soldier.

"Oh, I knew she would do that," said Martha. "She is as brave as the bravest."

"So are you," said one of the boys.

to death all the evening."

Two hours later the prisoners from Bell's store were brought into camp. Scouts were sent out on all the roads to make sure that no enemy could creep in on them, and the brave boys laid down to rest and sleep.

The next day they were up and ready for duty again. The day the prisoners were sent off to the nearest post, under a strong guard. When that was done, the camp was once more quiet.

But the boys were so pleased at the bravery of Myrtle Bowles and Martha Rives they cheered them every time they caught a glimpse of them.

Mrs. Bowles sent for Tom, and when he appeared in her presence she said to him:

"You saved all our lives last night by your bold ride and good judgment. I wanted to let you know how much we appreciate it."

"Tom Rives," said Myrtle, in a frank way that astonished him, extending her hand to him, "you are both a brave and skillful soldier. I honor you as such, and shall be always glad to know you as one of my best friends."

He took her proffered hand and said:

"I am indeed honored. I shall prize your friendship as long as I live. These are times when friendships have to stand severe tests. Your brother Harry is my right hand. He is brave, cool and true. He fought like a hero yesterday, and did as much as anyone to win the victory. I am not surprised that his sister is made of the same stuff."

She blushed like a schoolgirl, but the compliment was dear to her, for she was ambitious and very fond of the admiration of others. She had never before taken any notice of Tom; now that he was the hero of the day she was extremely gracious to him. But Martha was more the idol of the boys because she was not so much the young lady in her ways.

The day after the defeat of the Tories the farmers and their families began to arrive at the camp. The news had created the wildest excitement in the neighborhood ever known there. Not even the news of the surrender of Burgoyne created such interest. It was not to be wondered at, for they were mere boys-children from the homes along the river-and every parent wanted to see that his boy was alive. The grief of the family whose boy was killed was heartrending, and they had all the sympathy of those who heard of it.

Then other boys began to come in, all on black horses and wearing coonskin caps. They were welcomed and assigned to places. The money that was captured on the British officers was used to buy powder, lead and provisions, so the organization ceased to be a burden on those living near the camp. Some of the young women, fond of show and display, urged them to buy uniforms with the money, and many of them liked the idea. But Tom shook his head, saying:

"Our caps and black horses are uniforms enough. We may never make such a capture again, so we must not waste the money. We can do without uniforms, but not without food and ammunition."

That satisfied them, and nothing more was said about the uniforms.

During the week the recruits that came in increased the command to one hundred and fifteen boys-none of eighteen, and but two under fifteen years of age. Those two little fellows were crack shots, whose homes had been burned down by the Tories, and their parents forced to live with neighbors until quarters could be provided for them. Added to that, they were hardy and tough, as well as plucky.

Tom drilled them several hours a day, on foot and in the "I don't know," she laughed. "I've been frightened almost saddle, so that they were soon well trained. He always impressed upon them the value of implicit obedience to orders, making a little speech to them after each drill.

Ten days after the affair at Bell's store, news came to Tom that a squadron of dragoons was coming up the river, laying waste the country and gathering Tory recruits as they advanced. He kept the news to himself and prepared to slip dead were buried and the wounded looked after; later in the away in the night and meet the enemy before they were quite too strong for him. So that night Tom gave the order to quietly steal away and ride hard till daylight, guided by the full moon.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GIRL ON THE GRAY HORSE.

The Liberty Boys rode thirty miles before sunrise, and encamped in a dense woods where there was a stream from which they obtained water. Scouts were sent on further down the road in quest of the enemy. The boys laid down and slept till noon.

But the day passed without any word from the scouts, and others were sent out to find them. They were met about seven miles below.

"The redcoats are encamped at an old mill a few miles below here," said the scouts, "and they are coming up the road to-morrow. They must be waiting for something."

The fresh scouts went on to watch the enemy; the old ones pushed on to camp.

Tom resolved to move further down the road in quest of a place to meet the enemy, when he heard the report of the scouts. The move was made, and, about four mils down the road they found a dense woods on the right of the road, with an old field on the left.

Captain Tom looked the place over, and decided that it was a good place to make a stand.

"If we manage to keep well hidden," he said to the lieutenants, "our first volley will send them out into that field. We can then have 'em in full view while we are concealed from them. Now, each of you have your boys well in hand. Let the first fire at this end here, the second one about ten seconds later, and the third further down the line about ten seconds after. It will be a rolling fire that flesh and blood can't stand, even if they are the redcoats of England. Let 'em reload as fast as they can, and pick off dragoons at every shot."

They encamped there that night. During the night a party of a dozen Tories passed without molestation. Tom was afraid to stop them for fear his presence in the neighborhood might become known to the dragoons. They heard the Tories talking freely about the war, and of the terrible vengeance the king would mete out to the rebels in the end.

An hour or so later they heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs on the hard road in the direction of the enemy.

"Just one horse, and coming this way, too," said Harry Bowles, as he listened.

"Yes—we had better see who it is," and he ordered a dozen to spring out into the road and stop the newcomer, if he should signal them to do so. A few minutes later a big, iron-gray horse hove in sight, coming at great speed, ridden by a girl.

Tom instantly gave the signal, and the boys swarmed into the road and seized the horse by the bit.

"Oh, dear!" cried the frightened girl. "Who—who are you? Why do you stop me?"

"We merely wish to stop you to find out who it is that rides so fast and all alone in the night," said Captain Tom.

"I—I am but a young girl," she stammered. "Who are you?"

"I am Captain Rives of the Liberty Boys," said Tom.

"What!" she gasped, almost falling off her horse. "You Captain Rives!"

"Yes, miss. I am Captain Rives, of the Liberty Boys."

"Oh, if I was sure of that!" she cried.

"I can assure you of it," he said. "You were going up the river. Were you going so far up that way as the camp of the Liberty Boys?"

"Yes," she frankly admitted. "I—I—was—but really are you captain Rives?"

"I swear to you that I am," he replied.

"Then I will tell you that I was going after you—to tell you that a company of British dragoons are encamped near my hone, preparing to sweep down on you when you were not expecting them."

"A e you a patriot?"

"I am, and my father is in Colonel Bowles' regiment, under Washington."

"Colonel Bowles' son is my lieutenant. Harry Bowles is here."

"Is your entire command here?"

"Yes; right here in these woods," he replied.

"Help me down, please."

Tom assisted her to alight, and found her a pretty rosycheeked girl in her teens. She gave her name as Mildred Miller, and said she had stolen away from home in the hope of being able to induce the Liberty Boys to rush down on the dragoons before their Tory friends joined them.

"Bless your dear patriotic heart," said Tom. "That's what we are here for. So you have heard of our boys way down here, have you?"

"Yes; we heard that they had whipped them out of their boots, got all their arms and horses, and several British officers as prisoners. Is it true?"

"Every word of it—and then whipped another party the same night, riding twelve miles in the darkness to get at 'em. Now, tell me, how many dragoons are at the old mill, do you think?"

"About ninety all told," she said.

"How far are they from here?"

"Only about four or five miles."

"Can you pilot us to the place without our presence being known?"

"Yes, easily."

"And you will do so?"

"Yes, gladly."

"Then we will go with you. To horse, boys. We'll back up this patriot lady with our lives."

The boys led their horses out into the road and sprang into their saddles. Miss Miller was amazed at seeing so many of them. Tom introduced the lieutenants to her, and then assisted into her saddle again, she rode with him at the head of the column, guiding them through a little settlement road that led out to the top of a hill from which they could see the dragoon's campfires half a mile away.

"There is a thick woods out there on the right," she said to Captain Tom, "which runs right down to the water of the pond. They have those fires in the grove between the mill and the woods."

"Can we get into those woods unperceived?"

"Yes-I know every foot of the way, and will show you."

"But you will then be too close to the fight," he suggested.

"Oh, I want to see you whip them! I hate 'em!" and she fairly hissed the words as she spoke.

"Then lead the way. But wait a few moments. Boys, dismount and tie your horses. We must go in quiet as rabbits!"

It took them but a little while to fasten their horses, and then the silent march began. Half an hour later they were in the woods the young girl had told them about. The sentinels were pacing to and fro on their beats within hailing distance of the campfires.

"You had better go back into the woods out of the way of the bullets," Captain Tom whispered to her.

"No, I'll stay with you," she replied. "I am afraid to go back there by myself."

"I'll send a gnard with you."

"No. I'll stay here—right by you." and he had to let her have her way, though he well knew the dragoons would fight even though taken by surprise.

CHAPTER IX.

A DRAMATIC SCENE.

Captain Tom waited a few minutes to make sure his plateens were in readiness, and then gave the order to fire.

Twenty-five rifles broke the stillness of the night, and the sentinels on that side of the camp went down, and at least fifteen others were hit. The dragoons all sprang to their feet and rushed for their arms. Just ten seconds later another volley sent a shower of bullets into them with a terribly destructive effect. Another ten seconds and a third volley belched death at them. Just as the fourth volley was fired the dragoons replied with a rolling fire. But the first platoon came in again and laid many of them low. The manner of the firing told that a large force was upon them, and they broke and fled, going up the road beyond the old mill.

"Oh, they run! They run!" cried Mildred Miller, clapping her hands and jumping up and down like a child in her joy.

"Steady, boys!" cried Captain Tom. "Don't go into the light of that fire yet. Lieutenant Bledsoe, take your command up on the hill and stretch a line of guards across it down to the water."

Bledsoe promptly obeyed, and then the boys went over to where the redcoats lay thick on the ground. A lieutenant of dragoons was down with a broken leg. He sat up against a tree, looked at Tom and asked:

"Who are you?"

"Captain Rives, of the Liberty Boys," Tom replied. "Who are you?"

"Lieutenant Blake, of the Third Dragoonsoof His Majesty's army."

"You are wounded?"

"Yes-my leg is broken."

"Have you a surgeon in your command?"

"No-not here."

"I am sorry to hear that. Lieutenant Bowles, see that the arms are secured, and find out how many are hurt."

"About half of our troopers are hit," said the lieutenant, looking around at the red uniforms lying on the ground.

"We ought to have done better than that," remarked Tom.
"We seldom throw away any bullets. "We are in this war to kill as many of your men as we can."

The licutenant, a man of some thirty odd years, stared at the boys with wonder depicted in every feature. The fact that they were all boys, and some of them of such tender years, was like a dream to him. He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"Does the Continental Congress send all the children into the field?" he asked.

"No. These children you see here came out to meet you to prevent you from destroying their homes. Their fathers and elder brothers are with Washington."

"And you are their leader?"

"Yes—they have made me their captain. This is our third fight and third victory. This sword belonged to a captain of dragoons two weeks ago," and Tom showed him his sword.

Just then the wounded officer saw Mildred Miller among the boys. His surprise knew no bounds, and he called to her:

"Miss Miller! Miss Miller!"

She went forward, a look of defiance on her face.

"This is no place for you," he said to her.

"I came with the boys to see them do what they have done—whip the king's soldiers. Down with the king!" and she said it with such emphasis the boys took it up, and repeated it till the very wood re-echoed it.

"I am sorry Captain Ardsley is not here," she remarked to the wounded officer. "I went after these brave boys, to have them disgrace him in the eyes of all England. He is a brute. He insulted me, my sister, and mother, and for that I wanted to see him thrashed by the Liberty Boys."

"But I never insulted you."

"No, but you are about the only gentleman in your company."

Captain Rives then understood the intensity of the young girl's desire to see the fight. He turned to her and said:

"If you wish to return to your mother and sister you can have an escort."

"Thank you. I live on the hill up there," pointing in the direction the dragoons had fled. "I would like to go and tell them how badly the dragoons have been whipped by the Liberty Boys."

"Lieutenant Owens, take ten soldiers and escort Miss Miller up to her home, and leave a guard there for their protection."

As she turned to go she looked around at the brave boys, and

"Brothers! We sisters can do little else than pray for you while you fight for us, and that we will do day and night while we live. You little know what you have saved us from. The soldiers of the king are fiends. I hate them! If you have mothers, sisters, or sweethearts defend them with your lives, and spare not in the day of battle. Down with the king!"

The boys became fierce in their wild enthusiasm. They made the welkin ring with the cry of "down with the king!" She seized a sabre which had fallen from some redcoat, waved it above her head, and shouted with them. It was indeed a most dramatic scene, and the wounded British officer seemed to forget his pain in the contemplation of it.

When the cheering ceased the escort moved off up the hill with the young girl. Tom turned to the wounded officer, saying:

"I am inexperienced in the matter of wounds, but if you can give me any instructions about what is best to be done, I will do my best to follow them."

"Thank you, sir. My leg is broken, and a surgeon or a physician alone can attend to it properly. If you can send for a local physician you would place me under many obligations. What I have seen to-night has changed the current of my life. I shall never draw sword against a people whose very children go out to battle for their cause. I shall resign from the army."

"That shows you to be a true man, sir," said Tom, bowing low to him. "What you have seen to-night is but a type of the spirit of our people. I shall try to find a physician for you."

Several negroes had come into camp, and one said he belonged to a doctor who lived two miles away. Tom put him on a horse and sent five of the Liberty Boys with him to fetch a doctor. Two hours later the doctor came, and spent the rest of the night attending to the wounded Britons.

Lieutenant Blake was taken to a farmhouse and tenderly cared for, with a guard to protect the family from molestation. The boys put out a strong guard to protect the camp from surprise, and spent the night near the old pond where they had won such a signal victory. Not one of them had been hurt by the fire of the dragoons.

The redcoats had plenty of provisions, which had been taken from the patriots along the line of their advance, so the boys managed to have enough to eat. They passed the night without any alarms, and were up with the sun the next morning. Negroes were procured to bury the dead, and wagons brought straw for the wounded to lie on.

Mildred Miller and her elder sister came out to see the Liberty Boys, and the latter gave them a reception that startled them. It was a military salute of one hundred guns which they fired over them, to their very great surprise. Mildred seemed even prettier than on the evening before, and the boys crowded around her and her sister like bees about a hive.

They were all talking and laughing under the shade of a big oak when they were startled by the notes of a bugle on the clear morning air. Instantly every voice was hushed. The bugle sounded again—over a mile away. The boys looked at Tom, who was listening.

"That means British dragoons," he said. "Lieutenant Bledsoe, send a half dozen scouts up that way. Soldiers, mount!"

CHAPTER X.

"WE COMMIT NO TREASON!"

At the word of command the Liberty Boys sprang into their saddles, and waited for further orders. The two sisters stood under the big oak, and looked on with the deepest interest.

"You ladies would be far safer up in your home," Captain Tom said to them. "I don't know what is going to happen, but if there are redcoats there'll be a fight."

"Come, Millie," said the elder of the two sisters, "we had better go back to the house."

"I am going to stay here and see it," said Mildred. "I saw one last night, and am going to see this one."

"You are a brave girl, Miss Miller," said Captain Tom. "I could never forgive myself if you should be hurt. If we know you are safe, we can fight all the better, where you can hear the sounds of battle."

"Don't worry about me, captain. If I get a chance I'll help the boys fight."

"Then we won't fight where you are. Soldiers, forwardtrot!" and the whole band dashed off up the hill at a brisk trot, leaving the two girls under the tree. Tom led the way to the top of the hill, and then dashed away to a thick woods, a quarter of a mile beyond. Into the woods they rode, dismounted, and tied their horses, and waited.

Soon one of the scouts was seen coming back at full speed. He was halted by Captain Tom himself, who asked:

"What news?"

"A whole troop of dragoons," was the reply.

"How many?"

"At least one hundred and fifty."

"They can't charge us in the woods. We'll give 'em battle right here," said Tom, and he at once arranged his plan. There was to be regular volleys of twenty-five rifles every ten seconds.

"Make sure of your man before you fire, boys," he said, "and keep cool. If we whip this fight they will let us alone, I think."

Soon another bugle blast told that the dragoons were much nearer, and the brave boys grasped their rifles firmly and waited for them.

"Don't fire till you hear the order," sung out Tom.

The other scouts finally dashed up and were halted. They were astonished at finding their comrades so much nearer the enemy, but did not have time to do any talking. The redcoats were close behind them, coming at a loping gallop.

The Liberty Boys waited for the order to fire, and when it came twenty-five rifles cracked almost as one shot, and nearly a score of redcoats tumbled from their saddles.

The surprise was complete. The dragoons tried to form some sort of a line, but ere they did so, another volley crashed into them. Their officers dashed here and there and one sung out:

"Charge the rebels!"

Crash! came a third volley, and the men turned to flee from the death-trap they were in. They became jammed in the road -men and horses-and a fourth volley committed terrific havoc among them. They dashed into the woods on the other side of the road, and made their way along the edges till they could emerge out of range of the deadly rifles.

It was over within less than three minutes, only the dead and wounded in the road remaining to tell the story.

ery of victory. They had whipped the trained soldiers of Brit-

"Steady, boys!" cried Tom. "Keep your places! They may come again."

But the dragoons did not. They made all haste to return to the post down the river whence they had come, leaving their dead and wounded behind them.

Not a single boy had been hurt, and Tom was very happy over it. But not a prisoner, saved wounded ones, had been taken. One officer had been killed and another wounded. The latter was a second lieutenant, and his wound was a slight one. He would have escaped but for the fact that his horse was also wounded. Harry Bowles ordered him to surrender.

"Never!" and he tried to urge his wounded steed over him. Harry seized the bit, and the Briton cut at him with his saber. One of the boys caught it on his rifle barrel, and the blade broke.

"Shoot the redcoat!" yelled the boys, and a dozen rifles were leveled at him.

"Hold on, boys!" cried Harry. "We've got him-don't kill him!"

"Yes, you've got me," said the officer, throwing the hilt of his sword from him. "You may as well shoot me," and, he sat up straight on his horse and glared at them.

"We never shoot prisoners unless they deserve it," said Harry. "Get down, sir, and behave yourself. We are boys, but won't stand any nonsense!"

He dismounted and said:

"I am wounded in the shoulder."

"Sorry to hear it. Hope it is not a bad hurt."

"I don't know."

Just then Tom joined them, and Harry reported the capture to him.

"You command these boys!" the prisoner asked.

"I do," said Tom, "and they are the best boys in the world. They are out after Tories and redcoats. They whipped one party of dragoons last night and another to-day. If your general will send his troops along in squads of one hundred or so, we'll take care of all of them."

"You are too young to commit the crime of treason," said the young officer.

"We commit no treason. This is our country. We were all born here. We don't want King George, and won't have him."

Tom then ordered the boys to gather up all the arms, pistols, sabres and saddles and prepare to leave.

"The farmers must take care of the wounded," he said. "We have other work to do," and, placing the wounded officer on another horse, gave the order to march. They rode back to the old mill, where a score of farmers, excited by the news, had come in wagons and on horseback to see the boys.

"Oh, it was mean of you not to let me see the battle," said Mildred Miller to Captain Tom, when she met him again. He laughed and said:

"Our boys are so much in love with you they would not have won the day had you been along."

"Why not?" she asked.

"Why, what boy would look at a redcoat when he could look at you?"

"I might ask why should a boy tell the truth when he can make up such fibs as that?" she retorted, and the boys laughed heartily. Then she asked if they were going away.

"Yes," Tom answered. "We have done our work here. Your people must bury the dead and look after the wounded."

"If they come again shall we send for you?" she asked.

"Yes, and if not pressed by the enemy near our homes, we will come like the wind to your rescue,"

"Then good-by. We shall pray for the brave Liberty Boys Then the boys cheered till the wood echoed far and wide the day and night," and she extended her hand to Tom, who took it and kissed it.

The boys then dashed away with cheers. They had done

wonders without losing one of their number. It might seem unusual for such things to happen, and it was unusual. But the pages of history are filled with such deeds. An ambush is frequently destructive to one side only. Sometimes hundreds are slain on one side, where none, or but few, are hurt on the other.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VICTORIOUS RETURN.

The Liberty Boys were now on their way home again. They knew they could not reach there that night, but would be near enough to find out if the Tories were gathering for revenge. Tom talked freely with them on the way, and divulged his plan of fighting the enemy.

"When you have located them," he said, "strike quickly, when they are not ready, or else meet them where they least expect you. The best soldiers in the world become demoralized when assailed from an unexpected quarter. I've read the cam- but her courage. She cried out that she hated the redcoats, paign of great generals, and found that they pursued that plan whenever they could. Washington won at Trenton and Princeton that way. When we fire by volleys every ten or fifteen seconds we give the impression of a larger force than we really have, and that always demoralizes the enemy when he can't count us. I want you all to understand that so you can know what we are doing. If you fail to obey orders in battle, we shall lose and get slaughtered, and that's what we don't want to happen."

That night they encamped within ten miles of the Bowles place, and sent out scouts among the farmers to see if they had any news of the Tories. They found none, and so had a chance to sleep well. The next morning they resumed the march and reached home in a couple of hours to find twenty-two new recruits waiting for them, each with his black horse, rifle and coonskin cap.

"We'll soon have a regiment if the boys keep coming in this way," said Tom, when he met them. "This gives us one hundred and forty-two rifles. We'll have to do some foraging, since we can't live here all the time, our friends paying all the expenses."

The new recruits were assigned, and then Tom and Harry had to go to their homes to see mother and sister. Tom found that the two Tories who had been in his mother's care while wounded had gone home. She said they had both promised her not to join in any attempt to bring the war to her home again.

"They offered to pay me some day for what we did for them," she added, "but I told them they should not do sothat they should stay at home and let the patriots fight it out with the king's army-if they could not help us."

"That was a good suggestion. What did they say to it?" Tom asked her.

"They said they were loyal kingsmen, and could never go into rebellion. But they said they would never do any harm to me or mine."

"Well, I haven't any faith in any of them. They can never forgive us, boys, and so we have got to be on the lookout for them all the time."

"That's just what I think, too, brother," said Martha. "I overheard them talking one day, and they were saying what would be done to you boys when the king's army came through here. I did not let them know I heard them, but I watched them closely after that. If ever they can do so, the Tories will come here and burn us out. They hate you above all the boys."

"They will have to have a mighty big crowd in order to have their own way in this neighborhood. When did you see Myrtle Bowles last?"

stopped at the gate to tell me I ought to have a black horse, too. She is having a coonskin cap made for herself."

"Eh? For herself?"

"Yes. She says she wants to be a member of the company even though she can't go with them."

"The boys would elect her, and you, too. I'll get you a black horse. We captured two fine ones day before yesterday. Make yourself a coonskin cap, too, but don't let her know anything about it," and then he told her the story of Mildred Miller.

"She is the bravest girl I ever met," he added, "and the smartest. She stood up in the midst of half a hundred dead and wounded dragoons, and made a speech to the boys that fairly set them wild. I never heard such a speech in my life."

"How old is she!"

"I don't think she is yet seventeen. She has a sister who seems to be about nineteen years old."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Yes-the boys all think she is. I could think of nothing hated the king and all England, while a wounded British officer was listening to her. What a fighter she would be were she a boy!"

While Tom was engaged in thus telling the story of the expedition, he heard the sounds of a horse's hoofs on the road, and a few moments later Myrtle Bowles appeared at the gate on her black horse. He ran out to meet her and shake hands with her.

"Brother has told me of your victories," she said to him, "and I have come to congratulate you. You ought to have command of ten thousand men. I believe you could drive all the king's troops out of the country."

"I believe so, too," he laughed, "if I could get ten thousand such boys as I now have, and each one with a sister like Harry Bowles."

"Why, what could the sisters do?"

"Help them in a thousand ways. Every boy would fall in love with his comrade's sister, and——"

"Get love and war all mixed up," she laughed.

"Yes, for when a fellow has a sweetheart to fight for he is a better soldier than one who has none."

"I don't see how you could fight any better than you have. Have you a sweetheart?"

"Yes, but she doesn't know it."

"Why don't you tell her?"

"I'm afraid to."

"Afraid! We all have come to think that Captain Tom Rives is a stranger to fear."

"You look at him from a warlike standpoint. He is more afraid of the girl he loves than of all the redcoats in America."

"I don't believe you, Tom Rives. You are not the man to love a girl and not tell her so."

"I shall die with the secret unless I can see some evidence to show that she cares anything for me. I can hope while in doubt, and ambition to be worthy of her love may spur me on to win fame and fortune. To tell her now and find that she loves me not would be a death blow to both hope and ambition."

She looked at him in wondering surprise. She had never looked upon him as a youth of much depth, but his words seemed to come from one who had a big brain and a large heart. He had shown such wonderful capacity within the last month that his name was known and talked of for a hundred miles around.

"Who is the girl?" she asked after a pause.

He looked at her and slowly shook his head.

"I may be able to find out if she loves you " she laughed.

"No woman could love a man who told his love that way," "This morning, she rode by here on her black horse, and he replied, and she blushed as if ashamed of having asked the question. There was an awkward pause, but Martha came out from the house and joined them, saying to Myrtle:

"Brother is going to give me a black horse so I am going to be a Liberty girl, too," and she laughed in such a happy way the other envied her.

"You girls might get up a company on the same plan as ours," laughed Tom, "led by Captain Bowles and Lieutenant Rives. I don't think the enemy would have the heart to shoot at you."

"They would try to capture us, though," said Myrtle; "and, if they succeed, would have an excuse to hold us as prisquers of war. That would be awful," and they laughed merrily over the horror of such a situation.

CHAPTER XII.

MYRTLE BOWLES' DISAPPEARANCE.

After stopping at the Rives' gate half an hour, Myrtle Bowles bade Captain Tom and Martha good-evening and rode away on her splendid black steed at a brisk canter. It was but a mile to her home, and the road was one of the best in the country. Tom gazed after her till she was hidden from view by the trees and the shadows of a fast-approaching twilight. Martha was by his side.

- "She rides well," he remarked to his sister.
- "Yes; and she likes to be told she does, too," said Martha.
- "Indeed!"
- "Yes, she loves praise and admiration."
- "Well, isn't that the case with all you girls?"
- "Maybe so, but with some it is a passion. Myrtle Bowles can live on it, I believe."
 - "Well, I thought differently of her," said Tom.
- "Oh, you boys don't know much about girls," she laughed, as sh_{θ} ran into the house.

Tom went round toward the barn; but ere he reached there he thought he heard a woman's scream up the road. He stopped and listened, wondering how he came to think he heard it—and then went on to the barn.

The stars came out and he went in to supper. After the meal he and his mother sat out on the little porch talking of the war and the probable duration of it, when they heard a horse coming down the road which stopped at the gate.

"Hello, Tom!" called a voice.

"That's Harry's voice!" exclaimed Tom. "Come in, Harry."

"I've come for Myrtle," returned Harry. "Mother wishes her to come home."

Tom sprang up and ran out to the gate to where Harry sat on his horse.

"Do you mean to say she has not reached home, Harry?" he asked.

"She was not there ten minutes ago. Isn't she here?"

"No. She rode off up the road two hours ago, just as the sun went down."

"By herself?"

"Yes."

"She never reached home," and Harry's voice had a tinge of fear in it.

"Then something has happened to her. I stood here and looked after her till she was out of sight, Martha and I."

"What shall we do, Tom?" and Harry's voice faltered.

"Turn out and look for her. Ride back to camp and call the boys together. I'll be there in a few minutes."

Harry turned and spurred his horse forward, going at full speed toward the camp, which was quite near the Bowles place.

"It was her voice I heard," Tom gaid to himself, as he went back to the house. "I am sure of it now. She has been seized by the Tories. The Indians have no grudge against us about here. I'll put a guard about both places at once, and then make a learch for her,"

He did not tell his mother what he suspected. But from her place on the porch she had heard what had passed between the two boys at the gate.

- "What do you think has happened to Myrtle?" she asked.
- "I fear her horse has thrown her," he replied.
- "But they would have seen the horse when he went home."

"They probably did not—merely thinking she had stayed here to supper. I am going up to the camp to set the boys looking for her."

"Send me word when she has been found."

"Yes, of course," and he buckled on his sword, took his rifle and a brace of pistols, and hurried away.

He reached the camp and found the boys waiting for him.

He at once sent a guard of twenty to each place, telling them to be vigilant, as he had reason to believe that Tories were about whom the scouts had not seen. Then he sent five scouts out on each of the four roads, to patrol them. That left eighty to do the searching.

Morning found them weary and sleepy, but with no news of the missing girl. Mrs. Bowles was in a state bordering on frenzy. Tom went to her and said:

"I believe she has been captured by the Tories, so no harm will come to her. We shall not rest till we find her and restore her to your arms."

"Heaven bless you, boys!" cried the agonized mother. "I shall pray for every one of you," and she broke down again.

Some of the boys were good woodsmen. Soon after sunrise they succeeded in finding the trail of a dozen or so of men, in the woods near the roadside, which, when followed, led farther back to where as many horses had been hitched for hours. They followed it out into a little cattle path that led in the direction of Bell's store, where the Liberty Boys fought their first battle. Seven miles away it emerged into the main road, and the trail was lost in the travel to and fro, that was ever going on. Just as they were going to send back word to Captain Tom, a negro on a mule rode up.

"Is youse de Liberty Boys?" he asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Den dis heah is fo' you," and he handed the sergeant a note which he read as follows:

"To Captain Rives, of the Liberty Boys:

"I am in the hands of the kingsmen, who say they will hang me if you do not return the money you took from the British officers at Bell's store. They say that money was to be paid to them, and now take this method to force you to give it up. A man will be sent to meet you at a certain place to receive the money, and if he is molested my life pays the penalty. You are to send back instructions by the bearer of this, after which you will be notified where the money is to be paid and to whom. This places my life in your hands, and whatever you decide upon as best to be done, no blame for you shall ever pass my lips.

Myrtle Bowles."

"Lord, but it's hard on the poor girl!" groaned the sergeant, who knew that at least a third of the money had been spent for provisions for man and beast. "But we must take it to the captain. Buing the negro along." and they started back for camp with all haste,

Tem was dumfounded when he read the note. He questioned the negro, who said the note had been given him by five men near Bell's store, who promised him a suit of clothes to bring the note and fetch a reply.

"To whom do you belong?"

Tom asked the question with a suddenness that startled the negro, and he answered.

"To Marse Jed Echols, sah."

"To Jed Echols, eh? I don't know him. Where does he hve?"

"Eleben miles tudder side Bell's store, sah."

"Ah!" and Tom called out the name, asking:

"Do any of you know Jed Echols?"

"I do." said Will Needham, "and he's a rank Tory, too."

"Come here, please," and Tom and young Needham went aside and conferred a few moments. Then Captain Tom called out:

"Mount, boys, and follow me!" and he ran to his horse and leaped into the saddle.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW CAPTAIN TOM OUTWITTED THE TORIES.

The Liberty Boys dashed away about one hundred strong, forty-two of them being left to guard the Bowles and Rives places under command of Lieutenant Owens. No one save young Needham knew where the captain was leading them to at such a headlong pace, but they knew that he was after Tories, and that was enough. The negro who brought the note was placed in charge of two of the boys, while Needham and Captain Tom rode together.

"You know where he lives?" the captain asked Needham.

"Yes, and know one of his girls. He has three daughters and two boys. The boys are about twelve and fourteen, I believe. The girls are older. He has some four or five negroes and a pretty good farm, but is a rank Tory. That negro there is one of his. I have an uncle who lives about seven miles from the Echols place, and it was while I was on a visit there that I saw the whole Echols family."

"Is your uncle a patriot?"

"Yes, and I fear my visit this way may cause him trouble."

"But the most of his neighbors are patriots, too, are they not?"

"Yes, two to one."

"Then they won't trouble him. I'll give them fair warning that whatever they do to our people, that we shall do unto them."

Then Captain Tom began questioning the negro again as they rode along. He wanted to know if he had seen any strange young lady at the house. The negro declared he had not.

"Where are you to meet your master when you go back to him?"

"Down at de creek below de store, sah."

"How far from the store?"

"Bout er mile, sah."

"We don't go that way to get to his house?"

"No, sah. Dis heah road don't go dat way. We go roun' by de swamp, an' dar we come in by de barn, sah."

After three hours' hard riding, the Liberty Boys struck the Echols place, finding the family at home. Mrs. Echols was utterly dumfounded at their sudden appearance, as were her three daughters, all good-looking girls.

"Where is your husband?" Captain Tom asked her.

"I don't know, sir," she replied. "What do you want with him?"

"I want to see him. Is that negro out there one of yours?"

"Yes: he belongs to us."

"Very well. Please read that note and then you may understand what I want to see him about," and he handed her Myrtle Bowles' note to read. She read it through carefully, saying, when she had finished it:

"I don't know what it means. I have seen nothing of any young lady of that name."

"Your husband sent that note to me by the hand of that negro out there. I want you to send a note to your husband telling him that you and your three daughters are in my hands,

and that when he delivers Miss Bowles to me you can go to him."

She turned deathly pale, and one of the girls became hysterical.

"Don't worry, young ladies," Captain Tom said to them.
"No harm will come to you, unless harm is done Miss Bowles.
Whatever is done to her will also be done to you."

"But what have we done?" one of the girls asked. "We are innocent."

"So is Miss Bowles. War is bad business, and women should be exempt from its horrors, but the friends of the king seem disposed to make it otherwse. You had better send one of your sons with the negro with the note, Mrs. Echols, and tell him to explain it all to his father."

She wrote the note and sent it with her eldest son, a youth of fourteen, who was accompanied by the negro. As soon as they were off, guards were placed about the premises, and scouts sent out to every point of the compass as a precaution. It was then high noon. A bullock was killed for food for the boys, and Black Ben had charge of the roasting. The horses were fed from the contents of the barn.

The day passed, and a little before sunset the boy returned to his mother with a note from his father. She read it and handed it to Tom. He read it:

"I had nothing to do with Miss Bowles' capture, but those who did say they are willing to exchange her for you and the girls. They will find her waiting for them at Mr. Bell's home, near the site of the old store."

"Very well. You and your daughters must go with us, then. We cannot release you till we have Miss Bowles in our care." She demurred and so did the girls.

"Blame only your husband and father, ladies. He should have sent her back with your son."

They were forced to go. A wagon was hitched up for them and the journey began. A guard surrounded the wagon all the way. It was dark when they reached Bell's place.

"Oh, there they are!" cried Myrtle Bowles, running toward them from the house. Tom leaped from his horse and caught her in his arms. Harry rushed up and embraced her also. Then she shook hands with every boy in reach of her.

"Where are your captors?" Captain Tom asked.

"They went away two hours ago," she replied.

"How many were they?"

"About a dozen in all."

"Do you know them?"

"No, but their leader was named Echols."

Tom returned to the wagon, and said:

"You are at liberty to go home, Mrs. Echols. Tell your husband that another trick of this kind will end with his swinging from a limb. Say to him also that the best way he can serve the king is to join his army and put on the red uniform."

Then he bowed to the mother and daughters, and saw them drive away in the wagon. They were no sooner out of sight, than he turned to Harry and whispered:

"I am going to take twenty-five of the boys and catch Echols. You take command, and see that your sister reaches her mother in the quickest possible time."

"All right," said Harry, and Myrtle Bowles was soon in the saddle with the boys. Tom saw Bell in his home, and asked him what he knew about the capture of the young lady.

"Nothing in the world," was the reply. "They rode up here and left her at my gate."

"Did you know them?"

"I did not see them. They rode off immediately and she came in and told us why she was there."

"It was a bad piece of business, Mr. Bell. The women must be let alone, or we'll hang every kingsman in the country." "I think they ought to let the women alone," assented the old store-keeper.

"They will make a terrible mistake if they don't," said Tom. Then they moved off in the direction of the river, on the main road the boys took when they rushed to the rescue of the Bowles family. But when about a mile had been passed, Tom and a squad of twenty-five of the boys turned aside, unperceived by the others, and took another road.

Two hours later he was again in the rear of the Echols place, concealed in the woods, waiting to hear from the scouts who had been sent forward to ascertain whether or not Echols himself had returned home.

CHAPTER XIV.

TOM CAPTURES ECHOLS.

The little party lay in the woods a couple of hours waiting for the return of the scouts. At the end of that time signals from the scouts told that they were on hand.

Tom went out to meet them. They told him that Echols and four men had just come home, and were now putting up their horses in the barn. He at once surrounded the barn with the boys and captured the five men.

"Who are you?" one of the men demanded.

"I am Captain Rives," replied Tom. "Who are you?"

"My name is Echols," said another, stepping up to Tom. "What does this mean?"

"It means that you are a prisoner, Mr. Echols."

"What for?"

"Seizing Miss Bowles and holding her for ransom."

"But I did nothing of the sort."

"We'll find out about that. You are to face Miss Bowles tomorrow, and if she says you are innocent you will be set free." "Where is she?"

"Gone to her home. You are to go there with us at once. Any attempt to escape will result in your death."

They bound the prisoners securely on their horses, and then led them out. Echols wanted to let his wife know where he was going, but Tom objected, saying he could tell her where he had been when he came back.

"Why should she be kept in suspense?" Echols asked.

"She will hardly suffer as much from suspense on your account as Mr. Bowles did on account of her daughter. You are in the habit of going away from home of night when she was not."

Echols was tied on his horse, and two Liberty Boys took charge of each of the prisoners. They were taken over to the camp, which they reached about midnight. The next morning he was told that he would have to face Miss Bowles. He then acknowledged that he and the men with him, by the assistance of six others, had seized her and forced her to write the note that was sent to him.

"Just as I thought," said Tom, "and you would have hanged her if I had not gotten the best of you in the game."

"Oh, no. That was merely a threat. We would not have harmed her."

"We have it in writing that you would. I am going to see that you are properly hanged, Mr. Echols."

Echols fell on his knees and begged piteously for his life. Tom laughed at him, saying:

"You act just like a man who would do what you have done, Mr. Echols. Make war on women and beg like a coward when you fall into the hands of men. You asked for twelve thousand dollars ransom for Miss Bowles. If your friends will pay the half of that for you and your friends here, you can all go free. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Our friends are all poor. They couldn't raise six hundred dollars, much less six thousand dollars."

"Then it's all over with you five. If ever men deserved hanging, you five do. Lieutenant Bowles, as your sister was the victim of these loyal friends of the king, I assign to you the task of hanging them. You will take them down the road a mile or two, and see that they adorn the limb of some sturdy oak. Pin on their breasts a note that 'these men made war on women, and death was the penalty.'"

All five Tories fell on their knees and begged abjectly for their lives. Tom shook his head and the boys brought halters to place about their necks. They were on their knees when Myrtle Bowles and Martha rode into camp.

"What's the matter with those men?" Martha asked of some of the boys. They told her.

"What! Is Mr. Echols here!" Myrtle exclaimed.

"Yes—he is a prisoner."

She ran to Tom and asked if he was really going to hang the men.

"I would hang a thousand men if they raised their hands against Harry's sister or mine," he replied.

"But you must not hang them, captain. Make them take the oath and fight for the Continental Congress."

"Ah, that is good! I'll give them that alternative," and he led the two girls up to where the men were kneeling, saying:

"Miss Bowles suggests that we spare your lives on condition that you take the oath of allegiance to the Continental Congress, and then join Washington's army. I'll leave that to you. Which will you do?"

All five men sprang to their feet and cried out:

"I'll do it!"

"Very good. Take the halters off, boys. We'll see what sort of soldiers they will make. We'll send them under guard to the army."

That was what the prisoners did not expect. They had expected to be turned loose after taking the oath. That was the usual way. But they said nothing, being only too glad to escape with their lives.

Tom turned to Myrtle, and said:

"You came just in time to save them. I am glad you did, too," and they walked away together, while Harry and Martha went in another direction.

"When your note—or the one you made Mrs. Echols write," said Myrtle, "reached them last evening, you never heard such swearing in all your life. Mr. Echols was frightened almost to death. He was wild with terror. When I found out what you had done, I clapped my hands and laughed at him. I knew you would do all you could to save me."

"You were right. I would have hanged them to punish the indignity they inflicted upon you. Hello! I wonder who that is?"

A man on a fine bay was riding towards them. His bearing was that of a soldier. He reined up near a group of the boys and asked for the commander of the camp:

"Captain Rives!" called out one of the boys.

"Excuse me, please," said Tom to Myrtle.

"You are Captain Rives?" the man asked him.

"Yes, sir."

"I am Major Ogden, of General Greene's army."

Tom saluted him, and the major dismounted and handed him a sealed document addressed to "Captain Rives," saying as he did so: "This is for you."

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAN FROM GREENE'S ARMY.

Captain Tom opened the envelope and found it to contain a note from the commandant of the post at Richmond, as follows:

"Dear Captain Rives:

"The bearer of this is Major Ogden, of General Greene's army. He is sent by the general to ask the aid of every force now under arms in this section, as his army has come up from the Carolinas pursued by Cornwallis, fighting almost daily. Your command is not a part of the Continental Army, but the fame of your exploits has come to us and filled us with both joy and amazement, for we are told you are all mere boys. I have given the major this note to you that you might confer with him about the situation in your locality. That you may feel safe in so doing, I will state that the major is an old friend of Colonel Bowlés, whose home is somewhere in your neighborhood.

Most sincerely yours,

"R. F. Pritchard, Colonel Commanding."

"Do you know Mrs. Bowles, major?" Tom asked, looking up at the man when he had finished reading the letter.

"Yes-I met her once in Richmond," was the reply.

"Come with me, then, and we'll have a few moments' talk with her. If you are all right we are at your service," and he led the way up to the Bowles mansion.

Mrs. Bowles at once recognized him. Tom grasped his hand, saying:

"That's all I want to know, major. Pardon me for being cautious. We boys know that we have got to be cautious all the time."

"My dear captain!" the major exclaimed, as he wrung his hand, "your very caution stamps you as a born soldier. I am more gratified at that than with anything else."

"It has been the secret of our success," said Tom. "Defeat means ruin to us all, because the enemy is mad at our boyish pranks."

"Colonel Pritchard tells me you have twice whipped the dragoous. Is it true?"

"It is true, and the Tories four times. But we always attacked when they least expected us," and then he told the story of the Liberty Boys from the beginning of the organization. He also told of Myrtle and Martha, both of whom entered the house at that moment and were introduced. The major told of Greene's heroic campaign—of the long retreat and the fierce battle of Guilford Court House, adding:

"Cornwallis has followed us into Virginia, and Washington and Lafayette are coming to reinforce Greene and give battle to him."

"Washington coming to Virginia?" exclaimed Mrs. Bowles.
"Then I shall see my husband again!"

"Yes, and we hope to crush Cornwallis and end the war at one blow."

"Major, come out and speak to the Liberty Boys," said Tom.
"It will do them a world of good."

"With pleasure," said the major, and they went together. Tom gave the order to mount, and the entire command sprang into the saddle.

"What a splendid uniform you have—those caps and black horses!" the major exclaimed as the boys rode by.

"Yes, and every one is a dead shot, too. Those old squirrel rifles don't waste much lead. They can aim a well from the saddle as when on foot; and they know how to obey orders."

"That is the first duty of a soldier," remarked the major.

Then the boys'assumed a position in front of the officer, who said:

"Comrades, I come to you from the battlefields of the South.
The tide of battle now rolls in upon the soil of Virginia, for Cornwallis is at your doors. Greene is near with his veterans, and Washington with his Continentals hastens from the North.
Lafayette with his Frenchmen are marshaling for the fray, and the French fleet is on the coast. Soon the great battle will

be fought that is to end the war and make us a free people. I am come to you, by order from the brave Greene, to ask your aid in breaking up any attempts by the Tories to join Cornwallis or aid him any way. You are not a part of the Continental army, but the fame of your exploits in the valley cf the James has filled the hearts of the old veterans, who cry out, 'down with the king!' Our boys will take care of their mothers!"

The boys grew wild in their cheering. The major was an orator such as they had never heard before. They made the welkin ring with their shouts of:

"Down with the king!"

The major then told them of the terrible battles that had been fought by Greene, and how that consummate general had baffled the British commander in the long retreat—how Washington was now hastening to crush Cornwallis, and how they would have a chance to serve under him—the great general on whom were centered all the hopes of the patriots. It was a grand, eloquent speech, and the boys were stirred up as never before in their lives.

Just as he ended his speech a young girl dashed up on a big iron gray horse, coming at full speed. She dashed right into the midst of the boys and cried out:

"Liberty Boys, the dragoons are coming after you!"

"Miss Miller! Miss Miller!" cried the boys, recognizing the brave lass who had led them to the camp of the dragoons at the old mill two weeks before.

Tom ran to her and lifted her from the saddle, and led her toward the house.

"You have no time to lose," she said. "They are within two miles of you, two hundred and fifty of them. I counted them. They are coming fast to surprise you!"

"We can equalize the forces by one volley," cried Tom. He sprang into the saddle, and the major followed him. They dashed down the road past the Rives place, and up the hill beyond the creek. On the hill was a stone fence on both sides of the road, about four feet high, back of which were woods. It was a stony place, and the fences had been built of stone in order to get rid of so much rock. They entered the woods below the end of the wall, and tied their horses in the woods. Then they divided, one-half to the right wall and the other on the left.

"Let every man keep hidden till I order a fire. Then the left will give 'em a volley. Ten seconds later the right, and after that give 'em lead as fast as you can. If they get over the wall use your pistols. Here they come! Down, every man!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DEFEAT OF THE DRAGOONS.

The Liberty Boys crouched down behind the stone walls as the roar of the headlong rush of two hundred and fifty horses was borrie to them on the breeze. It became louder every moment, and soon the head of the column came into view. They knew they were quite near the camp of the Liberty Boys, and were straining every nerve to get up to them ere their presence was discovered. On, on they came, and when the head of the column had passed the entire length of the front of the concealed patriots, Captain Tom gave the signal to his boys. Seventy of them rose up and delivered a volley at close range, emptying half a hundred saddles. The redcoats were going so fast that those behind rushed over their fallen comrades. Riderless horses filled the road, and the hoarse voices of officers roared orders to "kill the rebels!"

They had nearly formed to charge the stone wall from which the terrible volley had come, when another withering blast greeted them from the other wall. Howls of rage, pain and terror filled the air. Men no longer obeyed orders, but rushed back only to collide with those who were rushing forward. That caused a jam between the two stone walls, and a panic ensued.

"Let 'em have it again, boys!" cried Tom, and they did, sending in seventy more shots where nearly every bullet found a mark. In another moment not a redcoat was in range. They were careering down the road whence they came, leaving the roadway filled with dead and dying Britons. Not one of the boys moved from his place. They simply stood up and peered over after the dragoons.

"Comrades!" sung out Major Ogden, springing up on top of the wall, "that is the best work that has been done during the whole war!"

"That's the way we do it!" cried one of the boys, at which the others laughed and cheered.

Over one hundred sabers, and fully half as many horses and saddles were captured. Two of the boys had been killed and five wounded.

The news spread rapidly, and farmers came from all around to view the battlefield and help bury the dead. Martha, Myrtle and Miss Miller rode out when they heard of the victory. The boys surrounded Mildred Miller and cheered her till they were hoarse. Her timely warning had saved them from destruction.

Major Odgen suggested that wagons be procured to convey the wounded dragoons to the nearest post where their wounds could be attended to in the hospitals, and it was done. The two dead Liberty Boys were buried with military honors, and the wounded ones taken to the Bowles mansion.

The battle and victory created a sensation. It electrified the patriots, and the Tories were correspondingly depressed. Recruits flocked to the camp from all the counties along the river till over two hundred and fifty were on the muster roll. Tom divided them into five companies of fifty each, and had them elect full company officers. Every boy came in on a black horse, and wore a coonskin cap. The Tories kept quiet. They did not dare make any attempt to organize again. Many of them went away to join the main army under Cornwallis.

Major Ogden made such a glowing report of the defeat of Walpole's dragoons when he returned to Greene's army that the veterans cheered themselves hoarse over it.

Washington was now hastening to meet Cornwallis. The latter was moving toward the coast in order to be in communication by water with Clinton in New York. He took up a position at Yorktown, on the York River, and proceeded to throw up formidable breastworks. He had a splendid army, well armed, and flushed with successes in the Carolinas.

Captain Tom was at a loss to know what to do under the circumstances. He had now two hundred and fifty boys to feed, and as many horses to provide for. It was too large a going force to forage on the patriots in the neighborhood of his home continuously, and yet he dared not go near the main army of the enemy, for fear of being attacked by an overwhelming force. He was puzzling his brain over the problem when Major Ogden again appeared on the scene, with an invitation from Greene to co-operate with him by cutting off the foraging parties of the enemy lower down the river.

"You

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LIBERTY BOYS VENGEANCE.

The day after the major arrived at the camp, Captain Tom set his command in motion. His mother and sister were uneasy, but the major assured her that the movement was as much a protection of her home as if they remained in sight of her house all the time.

"But they will meet the main army of the enemy and be killed," said Mrs. Rives.

"Very few are killed in battle in proportion to the numbers engaged, madam," said the major. "Captain Rives is a strate-

gist. He understands the art of war, and knows how to win battles at small cost. I don't think you need have any fears as to his safety."

Myrtle Bowles was with Harry, now captain of a company, when the order to march was given. Tom rode up to her side and extended his hand to her, saying:

"I don't know when I shall have the pleasure of seeing you again, Miss Bowles."

"Call me Myrtle for once in your life, Captain Rives," she returned. "We have known each other all our lives."

"If you will call me Tom, as you have always done," be said, as he held her hand in his.

"Yes—you will let us hear from you, will you not?"

"Yes, and as often as possible. I hope you will try to give us a thought now and then in our absence."

"I could not avoid doing so if I would," she replied, "and would not if I could."

"I am sure we think of nothing else but how to protect our mothers, sisters and sweethearts."

"Who is your sweetheart?" she asked, with a suddenness that startled him.

"I dare not tell you," he replied, and then he raised her hand to his lips and dashed away.

She sat there on her horse gazing after him like one in a dream. She sighed and said:

"He is a brave fellow."

The command moved on down the river road, and when the sun went down that day they encamped within ten miles of the home of Mildred Miller.

Lieutenant Owens and a dozen of the boys decided to ride over to see her. They got there two hours later, and found the home in ashes.

"This has been done by Tories in revenge for the warning she gave us of the raid of Walpole's dragoons," said the lieutenant. "I'll see what we can find out about it," and they rode over to the nearest neighbor's house, a quarter of a mile away, to make inquiry.

"We know nothing except that the house was burned down at midnight last night," said the old woman whom they saw there. "We went over to help them, but did not see any of the family about—nor have we seen them since."

"Nor heard of them?"

"No; we have not even heard of them. We don't know that anyone has."

Lieutenant Owens went to two other farmers and tried to find out something about the family. But they knew no more than the old woman did. But one of the boys found a negro who said a party of men crossed over the river that night, going toward the Miller place. He knew two of them, and said those two were kingsmen who lived over on Wilson Creek, four miles back from the river.

"Did you see them go back after the fire?" the lieutenant

"No, sah. I was er-gwine ober ter see my wife on Marse Bowen's place."

"You never saw any more of them, then?"

"No, sah."

Owens rode back to camp, getting there at midnight, and told the boys what had happened. Most of them were asleep on the ground, but those who heard the story were moved to tears of indignation.

Tom at once decided to send out one hundred boys as scouts to search everywhere for news of the Miller family. He encamped at the old mill near the Miller place to wait reports.

All day long the search went on and when night came half the scouts were still out. About midnight a party of them came in with Mrs. Miller and her elder daughter, whom they found lying tied by an old cabin twelve miles away, where they had been left by masked men at daylight the day before. The mother and daughter were half dead from starvation and exposure. They knew nothing of the fate of Mildred.

The boys were in a rage.

"This will cost the Tories dear," said Tom, and then he made a speech to the boys, telling them that they must avenge the girl who had risked her life for them.

The mother and daughter were provided for at the nearest farmhouse, and the next day Captain Tom sent out one humdred and fifty of the boys, with orders to bring in every kingsman living within a radius of twenty miles, on both sides of the river—particularly those over on Wilson Creek.

They had not been gone two hours when Mildred came into the camp, footsore and hungry—having made her escape from those who had her in charge the night before.

The boys were wild in their joy at seeing her.

"They were going to kill me," she said, "but a negro aided me in slipping away from them. There were thirteen of them, and I saw their faces, for they did not wear their masks after they left mother and sister, as they never expected me to get away alive."

She was so exhausted as to be unable to stand after the reaction came, and had to be put to bed and a doctor sent for.

When night came on again, the boys had gathered in thirtyseven Tories. They were all taken to the house where she was placed, and nine were identified by her. The next day all were set to work at rebuilding the house. In three days a goodly house was built, with a barn and outhouses—thirtyseven men working hard all the time. Then Tom, by vote of the boys gave Mrs. Miller five hundred dollars out of the treasury, with which to buy furniture and stock.

c On the fourth day the nine Tories whom Mildred had idenified were hanged and buried at a place, two miles down the civer. The hanging was done in the presence of the Tories who had been brought in by the Liberty Boys. It had a good effect, for not another house was burned in that part of Virginia during the balance of the war.

The greater part of a week was spent in the work of avenging Mildred's wrongs, after which the command moved on down the river. Scouts were sent out in every direction for news of the enemy, and two days later they met part of the Continental army under Washington and Lafayette. The officers of the old Continentals received the scouts with great cordiality, and told them to report to Captain Rives that he should march to join them at once.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RICH CAPTURE OF THE LIBERTY BOYS.

No sooner had Captain Tom heard that the Liberty Boys were wanted at the headquarters of the Continental army than he gave the order to mount. The boys sprang into the saddle them, with a long wagon train behind them. Utterly unconwith a shout, and went careering down the road like a whirlwind. They were eager to see the old veterans and tell them how they had whipped the dragoons out of their saddles, and to hear the old Continentals tell of the terrible campaign against Cornwallis in the South.

That night, after a hard day's ride, they encamped on a hill whence they could see the campfires of the Continental army for miles and miles. Such a sight they had never seen before, and they gazed long at it. Above all, they were most anxious to see Washington, who had been making history for six long years, baffling the best generals of England, and sometimes scattering their armies to the winds.

"Is Washington there?" scores of them asked, as they gazed at the innumerable campfires.

He must be over there somewhere," Tom said to them, "and to morrow we'll try to see him, and let him see us. Major Orden has promised to get a chance for us."

They slept well that night, and dreamed such things as they had never dreamed before. A desire to win glory in battle seemed to take entire possession of them, and early the next morning they began to fix up so as to look their best.

Suddenly a countryman dashed into camp on horseback and asked to see the "gineral." They sent him to Captain Tom, and to him he told of a foraging party of redcoats, two hundred strong, ravaging the farms over on the other side of the river, getting supplies for the king's army.

"Can you lead us to them?" Tom asked him.

"I can lead you to where I last saw them," was the reply.

"When did you last see them?"

"At daylight this morning."

"That is close enough. How many wagons have they got?"

"Nearly a hundred—a long string of 'em."

"We'll go at once. Where can we cross the river?"

"At the old ferry, two miles above here."

Tom instantly gave the order to mount, and the boys, thinking they were to go on parade before the commander-in-chief were in jubilant glee. They dashed away to the river. There, as they were being ferried over, Tom told them they were going to meet the enemy instead of Washington.

"Good! " they cried.

They hurried over as fast as the old flat-bottom ferryboat could take them. It took them two hours to cross, and then they dashed forward in pursuit of the enemy, with a dozen scouts in advance of the main body.

An hour later they met several farmers who were trying to get out of the way of the enemy in order to save the fine stock they rode. Through them Captain Tom learned where the dragoons were, and then Tom consulted with them as to the location of the roads in that part of the country. He was trying to find a way to get ahead of the enemy and ambush him, knowing that to fight any other way meant death to a number of the brave boys.

He got the desired information and a young farmer offered to go with them, and they were off at once. It was a hard run for nine miles. When they reached the main road Tom saw that he was in a good place for a stand. He gave each of the captains instructions as to firing in relays—one entire company in a single volley of fifty rifles each.

Scouts soon came in with reports that the dragoons were plundering a farm five miles up the road, loading the wagons with everything they could find that was needed in camp for man or beast.

Tom rode forward about half a mile to look at a piece of woods through which the road ran. It proved to be just what he wanted, and, half an hour later, he assigned each company to its position.

The enemy soon appeared in sight, about one hundred of scious of the presence of an enemy on that side of the river, they rode forward into the very jaws of death. The first volley seemed to mow down at least a score, wounding as many more. Just as they rallied to charge, a second volley met them full in the face. That caused no little confusion, and the third company's blast sent them flying back upon the rear guard for assistance. Then Tom ordered the boys out to follow them.

The whole wagon train was captured, as well as about a score of prisoners, who surrendered to save their lives.

Tom had several boys hurt, but none seriously. He ordered the wounded dragoons to be placed in the wagons and the prisoners under guard, and at once marched toward the ferry where he had crossed that morning. It was midnight before all were across, so they encamped there on the banks of the river till the next day. At sunrise they set the wagons in motion, and the long train moved off in the direction of the main army. They were soon halted by the Continental pickets.

When the old veterans found out who they were they cheered as never before in their lives, and the boys bore themselves like young heroes—for they felt like men—no longer boys.

The news ran through the camp like a prairie fire that the little boys who had been defending their homes had come in with a big supply train and a lot of British dragoons as prisoners. Major Ogden rode up with a number of other officers, and greeted Captain Tom.

"Where's General Washington?" sung out some of the boys. "He is here at headquarters," was the reply.

"They won't be satisfied till they see the commander-inchief," said Captain Tom.

"I'll see when you can make a call on him," the major remarked.

The quartermaster took charge of the captured wagon train, and at once reported it to his superior officer. In a few hours it had reached headquarters. Then he heard the whole story of the Liberty Boys. He had heard of their exploits before, but had never had any details.

"I wish to see and thank those boys," he said to Major Knox of his staff, and forthwith the staff officer conveyed the wish to the boys.

The next day the boys cleaned up and prepared to march by headquarters and see the tall form of the great commander.

Major Ogden led them, with Tom and his five captains by his side. The commander-in-chief sat on his horse and saluted them. The boys uncovered their heads and gazed in awe at the great warrior. Washington was so much astonished at their bearing he sent one of his staff to bring them back and halt them in front of him.

They lined up in front of the group of generals, and the young captains were introduced to him.

"Soldiers," the general called out to them, "in the name of the Continental Congress, I thank you for the services you! have rendered your country. No country can be conquered when the little boys fight for it, for when a boy will fight we may well expect the father to do so too. You have astonished us all by your deeds, and we gladly welcome you into camp. Your fathers and elder brothers are here to welcome you. You are my black chargers—every one of you, and it shall be my pleasure to look after your safety and comfort."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LIBERTY BOYS BEFORE YORKTOWN.

The words of the commander-in-chief made a deep impression on the Liberty Boys. They saw that he had recognized them as soldiers, and called them his "Black Chargers."

That was all they cared for. They cheered for Washington and the Continental army, and rode proudly away to the place assigned them in the camp.

A day or two later a staff officer came from headquarters with orders from Washington that they organize a regiment. They did so, and Tom was made a colonel, Harry a lieutenant-colonel, and Jim Owens major. How proud the boys were!

They were neither infantry nor cavalry, and were known as the Black Chargers. The horses were the chargers. In ten days one hundred and ten recruits came in-all on black horses -and joined them, making in all a force of three hundred and

One day, while the preparations for the siege were being pushed forward, three young girls rode into camp and asked to be conducted to the Liberty Boys. They were Martha Rives. Mildred Miller, and Harry Bowies sister.

They were enthusiastically welcomed by the boys.

Colonel Rives at once gave up his tent to them, and tented with Harry. Their presence in camp at once attracted many young officers of the Continental army, who had had but little of ladies' society during the last year. They paid marked at- Tom, crying out:

tention to them-particularly to Miss Bowles, as she had more of the accomplishments of the society women than the others. A brilliant young French officer was smitten deeply, and paid her very lover-like attentions. She was both flattered and charmed, for he was handsome, educated, and wore a brilliant uniform, and had all the dash of his race.

But both Martha and Mildred preferred the Liberty Boys. Harry Bowles was in love with Martha, though neither of them knew it at the time. Mildred preferred Colonel Tom's society to that of any other whom she knew.

They were soon to have a very exciting time, however, for the siege began with a terrific cannonade. It was the first the girls had ever heard, and they became panicstricken. The earth trembled under the tremendous bombardment.

"They are not firing in this direction," Harry said to them. "It is simply between the works on both sides," and he led them to a point where they could see it.

Suddenly the order came for the Liberty Boys to get into line, as it was feared the enemy intended to make a sortie.

"You girls had better go back to camp and wait for us," said Harry to them.

"I am going to stay on my horse," replied Mildred, "so as to be ready to get out of the way if necessary."

"Ben will stay and take care of you. He will know what to do if danger approaches," and then he rode away to join the Black Chargers. They were in position on the extreme left of the line, where a small body of cavalry had been placed to guard against any flank movement of the enemy. An hour passed, and still the tremendous bombardment went on. Then the red masses of the enemy began to emerge from the breastworks.

"Oh, they are coming out after us!" exclaimed Colonel Tom to the Black Chargers. "We are going to have hot work, boys, but we will make it too hot for them. Remember, now, we are where the commander-in-chief can see us. If we have to let us show what we can do. Aim well and make every t count. That is the way battles are won. Obey every order, no matter what it may be."

The enemy charged all along the line, and the roar of small arms was greater than the artillery for a while. The assault was repulsed and they fell back. Then their cavalry made a desperate attempt to turn the left of the patriot army. The patriot cavalry, greatly outnumbered, fell back. That left the Black Chargers to bear the brunt of the charge.

"Steady, boys!" cried Colonel Tom. "Don't let any of 'cm get away! Now, let 'em have it!"

The boys sat on their horses and aimed deliberately. One hundred rifles cracked, and nearly the whole front line of dragoons tumbled out of the saddle. But those behind pressed on, and the second volley of one hundred rifles struck them. The execution was horrible. Still, the trained troopers, led by brave officers, pressed forward till the third volley met them. That one was from one hundred and fifty rifles, and the blast was too much for them. They turned and fled.

"Charge!" yelled Tom, and the brave boys dashed forward. firing as they went. Dragoons tumbled from their saddles in every direction. The whole left wing of the Continental army looked on in deathless interest. The Black Chargers pressed on almost up to the breastworks of the enemy.

It was at this moment that a young girl, mounted on a superb black charger, dashed across the open space between the two armies, her hair streaming behind her and joined the Liberty Boys. It was Mildred Miller, and the boys received her with cheers. Someone gave her a saber. She held it in her hand, above her head, and sung out:

"Down with the king!"

A general officer from the Continental army dashed up to

"Get away quick, before they open on you from the breastworks."

Tom gave the order to fall back, and at the same moment a bullet killed Mildred Miller's horse.

CHAPTER XX.

A GIRL CAPTAIN IN THE CONTINENTAL ARMY.

When the bullet struck him, Mildred's horse reared and pawed the air. Then he sank down to the ground, and she fell out of the saddle. But she was on her feet in a moment, looking around, as if undecided what to do.

Colonel Tom saw her and dashed up to her side.

"Give me your hand," he said, reaching down to her.

She reached up and caught his hand.

"Now, jump!"

She made a spring and landed on his horse in front of him. He held her round the waist and put spurs to his horse. Bullets were flying thick about him. Many of the boys were hit and some fell to rise no more. The dragoons rallied and dashed out again, to avenge their defeat.

"They are coming again," he said to her. "You should not have exposed yourself to such danger. I must head the regiment. Take my horse and get out of the way. I'll get another," and he dismounted and left her in the saddle. In another moment he was on another black horse, whose rider had fallen, and dashed to the head of the regiment.

"They are coming again, boys?" he sung out to them. "Keep cool, and this time we will end them. Steady now-aim well -fire!"

The front line again went down, and confusion reigned in the ranks of the redcoats. Tom did not give them a chance to recover, but ordered another volley and a charge.

Mildred dashed forward with them, waving her sword and and bullets came thick and fast about her.

"Charge, boys!" she cried. "Down with the king!"

The boys grew wild in their fierce enthusiasm, and the dragoons again fled in dismay. Again the general officer dashed up and ordered them back.

"Oh, let us go over the works and whip 'em!" she cried, as the general seized her horse by the bit and dashed away with her. The boys followed her. Tom seemed to be no longer their leader. Back in the lines they were surprised at seeing the commander-in-chief there.

"My Black Chargers," said the general, "you saved the day. The ground out there is strewn with the enemy's dead. I thank you in the name of the whole army. Who is the girl? Where is she?"

"Oh, I am simply their little sweetheart!" called out Mildred, in her sweet, girlish voice, and the boys yelled and laughed.

Tom led her to the general and introduced her. He removed his hat and bowed low to her. She was too excited to regard the conventionalities, and said:

"Your excellency will pardon me. I couldn't resist the temptation. They are all my sweethearts, the best and bravest boys in the world!"

"She took my command from me, your excellency,' laughed Tom. "Let me have her shot."

"No man in the army would shoot her," was the reply.

"Very true, very true. I know that everyone in my command would gladly die for her. I would myself."

"Then I'll promote her. Miss Miller, you are a captain in the Continental army, and under orders. The first duty of a soldier is to obey orders."

"Thank you, your excellency. That means I'll be ordered off the field. But I've won my spurs, anyway," she laughed.

"Females don't have spurs," said Tom, at which even the

general smiled, while she prodded Tom with the point of her sword.

The commander-in-chief then rode along the line, and was cheered by both the Continental and French soldiers. But the young girl who had led the charge and had a horse shot under her was the idol of the army. The Liberty Boys crowded about to kiss her hand. She was in tears, for nearly a score of the brave fellows had fallen. Some two score were wounded.

"I must help nurse them," she said, and proceeded at once to do so.

Miss Bowles and Martha joined her at the hospital.

"Whatever in the world possessed you to do such a thing?" Miss Bowles asked her.

"I don't know. It was a sudden impulse, and before I knew it I was right in the thick of the fight with them."

"I wouldn't have done such a thing for the world."

"I would do it a dozen times over to whip the British. I would die on the battlefield if it would free my country."

Miss Bowles sneered. Woman-like, she was displeased at finding herself eclipsed by the impetuous young girl. Mildred was now the idol of the hour. She saw the sneer and turned away without another word, and went about attending to the poor fellows who were hurt.

"Oh, you angel!" said the boys, as she administered to them. But the tender, womanly ways of Martha and Miss Bowles also won their hearts, and many a fervent blessing greeted them.

"Captain Mildred Miller!" they called her, and she responded to everyone with a sweet smile.

The young French officer who was so deeply in love with Miss Bowles, called at the hospital to see Mildred. Miss Bowles could not stand that. She joined him at once, and soon led him away.

That evening he proposed marriage to her, and she accepted him. She would have accepted Tom had he declared his love cheering the boys on. Soon she was in the very front line, for her two weeks before. But the handsome Frenchman fascinated her.

> Somehow Colonel Tom did not feel her desertion much. He recognized certain streaks of vanity in her that did not attract him very much.

> A day or two later the bombardment was resumed, and the roar of artillery was incessant.

> "I can't stand this," said Miss Bowles. "I shall die of nervousness if I stay here another day," and she insisted on returning home. But Martha and Mildred did not wish to go. They said it was their duty to stay and help nurse the wounded boys. She appealed to Colonel Tom, and he assured her he would send an escort with her. He at once detailed five of the boys as a guard of honor to accompany her to her home. Harry tried in vain to keep her in camp. She had taken offense at something, and would not stay. So she left.

"What is the matter with her?" Tom asked Martha.

"Indeed, I don't know," was the reply. "She has been cross ever since the battle the other day."

"She hates me," said Mildred, "and I don't know why. I am not conscious of any offense."

"Why did your sister leave us?" he asked Harry late in the

"She says the bombardment made her nervous. She takes queer notions sometimes. We always let her do as she likes."

Harry was devoted to Martha, and as soon as his sister left the camp he spent as much time with her as his duties would allow. Tom spent a good deal of time with Mildred at the hospital. He found her full of tender sympathy for the wounded boys, all of whom called her "Captain Miller." She laughed and accepted the title, saying it was from the commanderin-chief, and therefore could not be refused, adding:

"But if I were a man I'd soon win a higher title."

"But you couldn't be our sweetheart then," they said.

CHAPTER XXI.

COLONEL TOM BEFORE WASHINGTON.

Several days passed and the bombardment went on. The enemy kept up a vigorous response, and the ponderous iron hail plowed the earth, or tore gaps through human ranks on both sides.

Cornwallis knew that, placed as he was, his ammunition would soon be expausted, if he kept up the constant duel with cannon, unless Sir Henry Clinton in New York came soon to his relief. To cease firing would be a notice to the patriots that his ammunition was used up, so he resolved to make another attempt to break through the cordon that had been drawn around him.

Patriot spies reported preparations for a rapid sortie, and Washington and his generals at once prepared to meet it. General Knox sent one of the staff officers to inform Colonel Tom Rives to hold his Black Chargers in readiness for any emergencies that might arise. Tom told his officers to be alert. The girls in the hospitals knew nothing of what was expected, and were in ignorance of what was coming.

Suddenly the storm broke loose again. The enemy came out from behind their breastworks and hurled themselves upon the patriots with all the fury of desperation. To Tom's horror he saw an entire brigade massing in front of him, with a cloud of dragoons on their right. They seemed to have come out to avenge the defeat of a few days before.

How could his boys withstand such a force?

Quick as a flash he resolved to let the Continentals take care of the British infantry, and devote himself to resisting the onset of the dragoons. To do that and avoid the fire of the infantry he would have to make a dash out on the left of the Continental line, and attempt to lop over the right of the enemy. That would force the dragoons to turn and meet him.

No sooner had he decided than he executed the movement. The officers of the Continental force at that end of the line were dumfounded. They thought he was deserting his post in the face of the enemy, leaving the left wing of the army unprotected from the charge of the dragoons. A number of officers became demoralized, and some uttered imprecations upon the heads of "those boys."

But if they were astonished the dragoons were even more so. They gazed at the flying Black Chargers and wondered why they had fled without firing a shot. But they were soon to learn what the sudden movement meant, for when the boys had raced a quarter of a mile up the line they suddenly wheeled, and bore round toward the rear of the dragoons as if to get between them and their breastworks.

Instantly the dragoons wheeled to confront them, leaving the right of their infantry line uncovered. The line halted, as the officers did not understand the movement. The Black Chargers swept down on the dragoons like an avalanche, halting at fifty yards and delivering a murderous volley that mowed down the whole front line.

Instantly the bugle sounded a charge, and the trained troopers dashed forward, sabers in hand. But the second volley met them full in the face and staggered them. It took them half a minute to recover and start again. Then the third volley came. Half a hundred riderless horses were in their Still they pressed on, and the fourth volley stopped them.

Then the infantry about faced to fire at rather long range, but the Continentals charged for the purpose of diverting their attention, when they had to wheel and meet them.

Just then the bugle sounded a retreat for the dragoons. If they fell back the Liberty Boys would get in behind the infantry. Just a minute passed, and the whole right wing of the energy fell back, but in good order,

a dangerous position. But in ten minutes he was back in his original position again.

General Jones rode up to him, and asked:

"Why did you shift your position, Colonel Rives, and leave me uncovered?"

"Because I feared the result of the combined attack of the dragoons and infantry, general," he replied. "I knew I could beat the dragoons by themselves, and you could hold your position against the infantry."

"Your judgment was good, but don't you know you had no right to make a movement without orders from your superior officers?"

"I never gave that a thought. I wanted to save my boys from a slaughter, and did so. I assumed the responsibility, but did not mean to disobey orders."

"I don't know that you have really disobeyed any orders, but only general officers are permitted to exercise any discretion in the movement of troops in battle."

The sortie was a failure for the enemy, as the movement of the Black Chargers was so entirely unexpected, and threatened such dire consequences to the whole right wing. The American generals were as much surprised as the British were, and a desire to investigate the matter was universal in the army. The commander-in-chief sent for the young colonel. Tom was nervous, for he feared a censure from the great general.

He saluted the commander-in-chief on entering his presence.

"Colonel Rives," said the general, "kindly explain why you left your position in the line to-day, and began an independent attack on the enemy."

"Your excellency, I did it to save my boys from a dreadful slaughter," Tom replied.

"Indeed! How so?"

"A brigade of infantry and a battalion of dragoons were coming right at us. My boys had never faced such odds before, and I dreaded the onset. It flashed through my mind that if we could deal with the dragoons alone, we could whip them, so I made the move to get out of the way of the infantry."

"And left our left wing exposed," said the general.

"I thought it was the right wing of the enemy that was exposed, and they seemed to think so, too."

The group of generals smiled. The remark was true in every sense of the term.

"But if they had pressed on, what would have been the result?" the general asked.

"The destruction of the enemy's right wing, for, after the dragoons retreated, we would have lopped over and struck them in the rear.".

"That was the object of your movement?"

"No, your excellency. My object when I made the movement was to avoid the meeting with the dragoons and infantry at the same time. But had the infantry not fallen back I would have struck them in the rear."

"Your explanation is entirely satisfactory, Colonel Rives," said the commander-in-chief. "You can rightfully elaim to have defeated the whole British army by a movement that all military rules condemn."

Tom saluted and then made a low bow to all the generals present. They all shook hands with him in congratulation over his success. Many of the officers laughed over the trick that puzzled the enemy to such extent as to force him to leave the field.

CHAPTER XXII.

LOVE AND WAR.

Colonel Tom Rives was amazed at the fame that followed his exploit. Wherever he went in the camp the French and Con-Colonel Tom immediately ordered a retreat, too. He was in timentals cheered him. The boys themselves came in for no little share of the glory. But all the credit of the movement was given to their young leader.

"Your brother is the hero of the day," said Mildred Miller to Martha in the hospital. "I am sorry we did not get a chance to see him play that trick on the enemy."

"Yes. It must have been a very great surprise to them," Martha replied. "But if you had been where you could have seen them you might have gone into the fight with them," and she laughed as she made the remark.

"I don't think I'll eyer do such a foolish thing aagin," said Mildred. "Oh, here he comes now!" and Tom entered the hospital at that moment, to pay his regular visit to the boys there as well as to see the two girls. Martha ran to him and kissed him. Mildred gave her hand and said:

"I congratulate you on your exploit. You boys do better when we girls are not in the way."

"Thank you. Had you been with us I think we would have gone over the breastworks and spiked their guns."

"And all would have been killed or captured," she said. "I won't lead you boys into danger again," and she laughed and shook her head.

"There is less danger in a daring move than a timid one. It is always something an enemy is not prepared for."

"It is no place for a girl. Oh, if I were a man so I could join in battling for our country!"

"Well, I am glad you are not a man," said Tom. "I like you better as a girl."

"So do all of us," said one of the wounded boys. "She's a 'captain' and an angel at the same time. Martha is an angel, too, a pair of them."

The two girls laughed, and Martha said:

"These boys in here know we can't punish them, so they are always calling us angels and sweethearts."

"I don't blame them. You are both good angels. I can't call my sister my sweetheart; but this one here I can," and he took Mildred's hand in his, looked her in the face and said:

"Sweetheart! Sweetheart!"

Mildred blushed furiously, and at least a dozen wounded boys sung out:

"Sweetheart! Sweetheart!"

"See here, boys!" said Colonel Tom, "the colonel has first choice, you know. I want her for my sweetheart, and everyone of you must give up your claim. If she won't have me, then you can have a show. Mildred Miller—Captain Miller—will you be my sweetheart, and when this war ends be my wife?"

"Yes," she replied, promptly, and he raised her hand to his lips.

Martha sprang to her side and kissed her, saying:

"Oh, I'm so glad! You'll be my own dear sister!"

"Boys, the colonel's got her!" cried one of the wounded ones.

"No, he hasn't," sung out another. "She's got him! Oh, the sly puss!"

The boys laughed, and happy Mildred laughed with them, and blushed, too happy to speak at the moment.

"We can't let her get away from us, boys," laughed Tom.

"No, indeed!"

Harry came in, and some of the boys told him what had happened. The young lieutenant-colonel went up to Tom and thook hands withh im. Then he shook hands with Mildred, aving:

The whole regiment would have stood in line, and let you pick out a harband. Not one would have declined the honor of our choice."

Ten minutes later he got Martha out of the hospital, and

* In that I love you, and when this war is ended I want you to be my wife. Will you?"

"Yes, Harry," she replied, in a low, sweet voice, as she laid her hand in his. Said he:

"I've loved you ever since the day you stood by me and loaded my rifle while fighting the Tories."

"And it was then I began to love you," she confessed. "I saw how brave you were, and how you seemed ready to die to save us."

"I would die to save you, if necessary," he said.

"It is not necessary. We'll both live for each other. I think Mildred and I ought to go home now."

"Wliy?"

"I-I-think we ought to be with our mothers," she replied.

"I'll see Tom about it."

Half an hour later they met Tom and Mildred, and soon Mildred knew of the engagement. Harry told Tom about it, and the latter was pleased.

"Yes," he said, "they should go home, though the boys will miss them. There's going to be a tremendous battle here soon, and they might get hurt."

"That's what I think, too," assented Harry. "I hardly think you could keep Mildred out of it."

The very next day the patriot army made an assault all along the line. The Black Chargers were on foot, for the enemy fought behind his breastworks, and many of the Continentals fell in front of them. Four of the Liberty Boys fell, and eleven were hurt. Martha and Mildred refused to go home at once, since more of the boys were hurt.

"The poor fellows need us," they said, with tears in their eyes.

So another week passed, and one day the enemy made a desperate sortie—a last desperate effort to cut their way out. It was the hottest day they had made in the siege. The dragoons and the Liberty Boys again met, and many on both sides fell. Colonel Tom's horse was shot under him, and both rolled in the dust together.

Tom was stunned and lay like one dead. The dragoons rode over him. The British infantry ran over him, but both thought him dead. He had fallen so close to the enemy's line that he could not be brought away except under a flag of truce.

Somebody told Martha that Tom was killed. She fainted dead away, the calamity seemed so great. But Mildred sprang up and went in search of him. She ran forward till she was within fifty yards of the enemy's breastworks. The redcoats looked at her in no little sympathy.

Suddenly she found Tom lying by his horse just pulling himself together. He had had a hard fall, and his head was yet spinning.

"Tom! Tom!" she cried, kneeling by his side and taking his head between her hands. "Tell me you are not dead! Speak to me!" and the agony of her voice seemed to recall him somewhat.

"Huh!" he said, looking up at her in a dazed sort of way. She looked at the redcoated Britons on the breastworks, and called out:

"Will one of you cease to be an enemy for a little while?"

Instantly a stalwart Irishman leaped over the breastworks and ran to her.

"What can I do for ye, miss?" he asked.

"Bear him to our lines and Heaven and a poor girl will bless you," she cried.

He lifted Tom in his brawny arms and stalked away toward the patriot lines with him. The patriots cheered him; so did the redcoats. She walked by his side, holding Tom's hand with her left, and carrying his cap in her right hand.

At the line two patriot soldiers took him in their arms, while a score shook the redcoat's hand. Mildred gave him her hand and said:

"Oh, I thank you more than words can say! May you sur-

vive to reach your own home and always be happy!" and then she ran on after those who were bearing Tom to the hospital.

Not to be outdone, two patriot soldiers laid down their guns and went back with the redcoat, as an escort to his lines, cheered by the soldiers of both armies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GREAT SURRENDER.

When Tom reached the hospital he was so far recovered as to know those about him. Martha had come out of her swoon and was bravely facing the worst, when she saw him raise his head and look at her.

She gave a scream of joy and ran to him.

"They told me you were dead!" she cried.

"Well, I thought I was, but it was a mistake," said he. "I am going to see the end of this war. Ah, Captain Miller!" he added as Mildred ran up.

"Oh, you're worth a whole regiment of dead men!" she said.

"And you're worth a million dead girls," he replied. "I don't believe I am even half dead yet."

"You are not going to be, either, if I can help it. Lay him here," and she showed where he was to be laid. No sooner had they laid him down than he staggered to his feet and said:

"I think I was only stunned by the fall. I'm not wounded."
A surgeon came up and suggested that he lie down and bc

A surgeon came up and suggested that he lie down and b quiet, saying:

"There's nothing for you to do, so keep quiet and rest. I put him in your charge, Captain Miller."

"There!" exclaimed Mildred. "The surgeon outranks even the commander-in-chief in the hospital. You must obey!" and she led him back to the cot, pushed him down on it, and held him there. He made no resistance, save to seize one of her hands and press it to his lips.

"That's sweet enough to heal all my hurts," he said.

She was so rejoiced that he had escaped alive she kept smiling all the time. Said she:

"If I had not gone out and found you and had you brought in, you would have died there within fifty yards of the enemy's line."

"How did you get me away from there?" he asked, and she told him.

"Well, I hope that fellow won't get hurt," he said.

"That's what I said to him," she replied. "He was an Irishman—not a Briton."

Tom was too badly shaken up to do any service again for several days. Both Martha and Mildred remained near to nurse him. Neither would think of going home as long as he was in the hospital. Harry had full command in his absence, and did not have much time to visit them.

But one day Tom got up and said he was all right again. He went out to see the boys of the regiment, and they made the welkin ring with their shouts of welcome. While they were cheering him, a flag of truce appeared on the breastworks of the enemy, and the firing ceased. A white flag in the hands of an officer appeared, and several officers of the Continental army went to meet it.

Soon it was known that Cornwallis wanted to surrender. In their joy the old Continental soldiers fell on each other's necks and wept.

Some yelled like lunatics, and others danced and sang.

When the news reached the hospital, the two girls ran out, had the saddles placed on their horses, and mounted them. They dashed out to the line in front of the Liberty Boys. Mildred was bubbling over with joy. She cried out in clear silvery tones:

"The ling is beaten! America is free! Long live Washington!"

The boy responded by repeating her words. The cry rolled

along the line like a wave. She dashed away on her black charger and rode the full length of the line, crying out:

"Victory! Victory! Our country is free!"

How the old soldiers yelled! The Frenchmen could not understand her words, but they knew the beautiful heroine by sight and cheered her at the top of their lungs.

When she returned to the Liberty Boys her charger was covered with foam. She looked at the boys, and sung out:

"Sweethearts, we have won! This is the end of the war! You can soon go home now, to tell of the brave deeds of your comrades who fell in battle by your side! They did not die in vain, and you must not let their names be forgotten!"

Colonel Tom rode up to her side, seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips, at which the boys cheered again. Martha was more quiet, yet she sat on her horse trembling with the excitement of the hour. Harry was by her side all the time, and she was as happy as Mildred was, only she was not so demonstrative.

The next day the whole British army marched out and laid down their arms on the field. The Liberty Boys were in line where they could see them, and it was the happiest day of their lives. Mildred and Colonel Tom sat on their horses, side by side, and looked on as the redcoats laid down their muskets and the officers gave up their swords. A few other ladies, officers' wives, were present, and their interest in the young heroine was scarcely less than in the great drama that was being enacted on the field.

When the full surrender had been completed the British officers mingled freely with those of the allies. Many asked the honor of an introduction to the young heroine whom they had so often seen during the siege.

One of them, a general, said to her:

"Had you led an assault on our works they would have been carried, for you are an inspiration to soldiers on a battlefield."

"Would your soldiers have shot me?" she asked.

"Not purposely. For two weeks you have been their theme as the beautiful rebel. You haven't an enemy with a red coat on his back to-day."

"But they are enemies of my country," she said.

"They are loyal to their king. They are also loyal to woman. Go among them and see how they will receive you."

"I only wish to see one of them—the brave fellow who carried our young colonel back to our lines. Could you find him for me."

"He is private O'Hare of the Third Regiment in Balfour's Brigade. Every soldier knew him after that incident, and all Engand will hear of it when he goes home."

"Will you all go home now and leave us alone?"

"That is more than I can say. We have no idea out here what the king and his ministers will do."

"But when they hear of this surrender they will see how impossible it is to conquer us."

The general smiled. He was in no mood to discuss the issue with her.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

The surrender of Cornwallis sent a thrill of joy throughout all the colonies. Bonfires blazed on every hilltop, and every church bell in the land rang out the glad tidings.

The Liberty Boys remained in camp a fortnight longer, for it was feared that Sir Henry Clinton might land his army somewhere on the Virginia coast. But as soon as he heard of the surrender he hurried back to New York, and the Continental army marched northward to try conclusions with him

But the regiment of Liberty Boys was left down in Virgin to keep the peace there. Colonel Tom gave the order to march and Mildred rode by his side, the idol of the boys Martha

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TRY TO WIN A MOTORCYCLE

kept by the side of Harry, and as they advanced nearer to their homes the happier they became. Each night when they went into camp the boys raised a tent for the girls and placed a guard around it.

On the second day of the march, they encountered a body of Tories, who wanted to take the oath of allegiance to the Continental Congress,

"Never mind about that now," said Colonel Tom. "Just go to your homes and work for your families. The kingsman who makes any more trouble in this part of the country will be hanged. The cause of the king is dead in America, and all the country will be free and independent."

Two days later they reached the scene of their earliest operations, and encamped near the home of Tom's mother. He dashed up to the house, accompanied by Mildred and Martha. Mrs. Rives uttered a cry of joy, and ran to meet them. Martha sprang to the ground and ran into her arms, while Mildred ran to her mother and sister. Then came Tom for his greeting. How the proud mother wept on his neck! He had won fame under the eyes of Washington himself, and had returned safely to her once more.

That evening, by the blazing hearthstone, he told his and Mildred's mother the story of the siege and surrender—of how Mildred became the idol of the allies, and was named "Captain in the Continental Army" by Washington.

Mildred sat quiet and demure, gazing at him as he talked.

She remembered only that she loved him.

"And, mother," he added, when he had finished the story, "she is going to be my wife when peace is proclaimed through the land."

Both mothers sprang at her to fold her to their hearts. She

"I have been so happy ever since he said he loved me. He is my soul. If I have one of my own he has absorbed it. When he dies I die. There is but one life for both of us."

Tom gazed at her lovingly. She had never spoken so before. He little knew the intensity of her love for him. He did not know that it was her love for him that led her into that terrible carnage at Yorktown, the day she became the idol of the army. The truth came to him now, and he knew that love and patriotism blended strongly in the soul of the impetuous girl.

"Will the war end at Yorktown?" Mrs. Rives asked.

"Everyone in the army seems to think so," he replied. "I think the Continental Congress, though, will try to push forward vigorously in order to force Sir Henry Clinton to surrender before another army can come to his assistance. Washington is moving north, and the French fleet and army will probably co-operate with him. I am ordered to hold my regiment in readiness to move at any moment. I don't know of any British force in Virginia now."

How proudly she listened to him speak of his regiment, of orders from the great Washington, and of the situation along the James! He was a colonel now—the same rank as that held by Colonel Bowles, the aristocrat—and he had won it by hard fighting with none but boys like himself to back him.

"How did Harry com_{θ} to be second in command?" Mrs. Rives asked.

"By merit alone, mother. He is a good officer, cool and brave at all times. I was surprised at him. He has never made a mistake. Do you know he has asked Martha to be his wife when the war ends?"

"No!" she gasped.

Martha blushed, but said nothing, while her mother locked at her inquiringly.

"Yes, it is true," added Tom, "and I believe she has promised. He told me he had loved her ever since that day she stood by him, here in this room, and loaded his rifle for him when the Tories attacked us."

"Well, well!" exclaimed the widow. "Fighting and making love at the same time!"

The clatter of a horse's hoofs at the gate caused Tom to go to the door.

It was Harry Bowles. His face was pale as he entered the room, and his eyes flashed as with the light of battle.

"Martha," he said, turning to Tom's sister after he had shaken hands with the others, "my father has returned home on leave of absence from the army, and sternly orders me to break my engagement to you. I have come to tell you that no power on earth can make me do that. For you I would leave all I hold dear on earth. Will you cling to me?"

"Yes," she replied, going up to him and laying both her hands in his. "Even unto death, Harry."

"That is enough. Nothing but death shall part us. By my grandmother's will I come into possession of her place when of age, with all the stock and slaves. Sister is to get the Pamunky River farm, so we shall not want for a home of our own."

Then he took leave of her and went back home. He was now nearly nineteen, and a very manly young fellow with a decidedly soldierly bearing.

Colonel Bowles was an aristocrat in every sense of the word, and held all poor people in contempt. When he was told that his daughter was engaged to a young French nobleman in Rochambeau's army, he was very much pleased, but was furious on learning of Harry's engagement to Martha Rives. In stern language he commanded him to break it off at once on pain of his displeasure. Harry very promptly declined to do so.

Harry rode down and let Martha know about it, and on his return went out to sleep in his tent with the boys.

The next day he did not go to the house, and late in the afternoon his mother rode out to see him.

She told him to come home.

"My home is here in camp, mother," he said. "Where you live is father's home. As I intend to marry Martha against his wishes, I shall never sleep under his roof again."

"Harry, do you know that your father is not the man to submit to such opposition to his wishes?"

"I have some of his temper myself. I shall not give up Martha even to save his life. Tell him so from me."

When she did so he was in a rage.

He waited till the next day, and rode out to the camp to see Harry.

Colonel Tom was there, but the old colonel did not notice him.

The soldiers saluted him, as he wore his uniform.

Harry led him into his tent, and in a few minutes the old aristocrat was heard, denouncing the whole brood of Rives as "common cattle."

Colonel Tom heard him, and his face paled. When the colonel came out and started toward his horse, Tom intercepted him with:

"Colonel Bowles, you have seen proper, in the hearing of my comrades, to speak insultingly of my family. As my rank equals yours, you will apologize to me here and now, or fight."

The colonel gave a sneering laugh, and started to mount.

Quick as a flash Tom sprang forward and gave him a sting-

fng lap on the check, with his open hand

It is a rule in all armie, that an officer must resent a blow

It is a rule in all armic, that an officer must rescut a blow or of eac ign his aword.

Colonel Bowles sprang back, livid with rage, and drew his sword.

Tom's flashed in the air, and the ringing of steel against steel attracted every boy in the camp.

It was but a moment or two ere Bowles' weapon was sent flying in the air.

The colonel stood aghast.

He was at the mercy of him whom he had grossly insulted. Tom stood and looked him full in the eyes for a minute. Then he said:

"I am waiting for your apology, sir."

"You will not hear it."

"Take up your sword again, then," said Tom.

"I decline to do even that."

"Then take that, sir!" and Tom spat in his face.

With a howl of rage, he sprang to where his sword lay on the ground, seized it and rushed like a madman on the intrepid young colonel.

The next moment Tom ran him through the left shoulder.

He reeled backward, and was caught by the major of the reginent.

He was in such a rage he insisted on fighting again.

"Colonel Bowles, you are a coward and a fool!" said Tom.
"You are a disgrace to that uniform, and I shall see if there is not a way to take it off your back. You owe your rank to social position, not merit. After five years you have won no promotion. I have naught but utter contempt for you!" and with that he turned and walked away, leaving to Major Owens the task of having the colonel conveyed to his home a mile away.

Colonel Bowles was confined to his room for weeks, but ere he got out again he found that the whole county was against him.

Colonel Tom Rives was commended everywhere.

Harry never went to his home again during the time his father was there.

Negotiations for peace were going on all the time now.

The Continental Congress made Colonel Rives a general on his twenty-first birthday, thus raising Harry to the rank of colonel.

Then came the peace treaty and the disbandment of the

General Rives immediately married Mildred Miller, and Colonel Harry Bowles married Martha Rives.

The young French officer returned to France, refusing to marry Genevieve Bowles on account of the loss of social prestige of the Bowles family.

She never married, yet she had loved Tom Rives till she met the dashing Frenchman.

Tom, some twenty years later, became Governor of the State, and Harry was sent to Congress.

Both lived to old age, and were always known as The Liberty Boys.

THE END.

Read "THE READY REDS; or, THE FIRE BOYS OF FAIR-FAX," by Ex-Fire Chief Warden, which will be the next number (598) of "Pluck and Luck."

SPECIAL NOTICE: All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 5, 7, 8, 10 to 20, 22 to 25, 27, 29 to 36, 38 to 40, 42, 43, 48 to 50, 53 to 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66 to 69, 72, 75, 81, 84 to 86, 88, 89, 92 to 94, 99, 100, 107, 107, 109, 110, 116, 119, 124 to 126, 132, 140, 163, 166, 171, 179 to 181, 212, 247, 257, 265. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by 1141 to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 24 UNION SQUARE New York, and you will receive the copies you order, by return 1141.

Pluck and Luck.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 10, 1909.

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THINGS OF INTEREST'S

A dressmaking establishment in Boston almost entirely operated by electricity has an electric cutter capable of cutting out 250 thicknesses of cloth at once, a button-sewing machine which puts on 3,000 buttons a day, a buttonhole machine making 400 per hour, sleeve sewers, tucking machines, waist and skirt machines making 1,800 to 3,500 stitches a minute.

Work is actively in progress on the construction of another mountain railroad across the Andes, this time from La Paz, Bolivia, to Aricas, Chili. The railroad, which is about 33 miles long, reaches an extreme height of 13,000 feet above the sea, and it will serve the important purpose of giving the commerce of Bolivia a port of exit. Sir John Jackson, of London, who has contracted to build the road for \$15,000,000, on his way home from Chili, by way of New York, made a private inspection of the Panama Canal. He expressed his conviction that the work would be completed in six and possibly in five years from the present time.

An effort is to be made to stock the Hudson River as well as other Northern rivers of the United States with sturgeon, a fish that once swarmed in their waters, but which has since been exterminated. The proposal comes from Mr. Horace G. Knowles, formerly American minister to the Balkan States. Through Mr. Knowles' efforts the Roumanian Government has promised a carload of sturgeon fry, some cans of young sterlet, and smaller food fish to populate our waters. The first consignment of several thousand fry will probably be planted in the Delaware River. The native sturgeon have been all but exterminated by wastefulness.

Paper money—properly guaranteed—is now generally recognized throughout the world as the most satisfactory and convenient form of currency. It is not, however, as is very generally supposed, a comparatively modern idea. The celebrated traveler, Marco Polo, of Venice, was the first person to announce in Europe the existence of paper money in China, under the Moguls. It was subsequently introduced by the Moguls into Persia, where their notes were called djaou or djaw, a word evidently derived from the Chinese word schaio, signifying "a want of specie." The fact of the Moguls having, in China and Persia, made use of paper money, has induced the belief that they were the originators of it. But in the history of the Tchinghiz-khan, and of the Mogul dynasty in China, published in the year 1739, the author speaks of

the suppression of the paper money, which was in use under the dynasty of the Soung, who reigned in China previous to the Moguls; and he also mentions a new species of notes which were substituted for the old in the year 1264. The original financial speculation of the Chinese ministry, to provide for the extraordinary expenditures of the state, which were exceeding the revenues, was in the year 119 B. C. At this period were introduced the phi-pi, or value in skins. These were small pieces of the skin of dear, which were kept in a pen, within the palace walls. They were a Chinese square foot in size, and were beautifully ornamented with painting and embroidery. The price of these skins was fixed at a sum equal to about \$65.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

Father—You should never do in private what you would not do in public. Sweet Seventeen—How about my morning bath?

Little Fred—Why is it that women are always complaining about their servants? Little Elsie—Oh, that's just to let people know they can afford to have 'em.

He—The major is going to be married again. She—Why, when his wife died he said that the light of his life had gone out. He—There's no reason why he shouldn't strike another match, is there?

Dealer—I am sure, madam, you could look the city through, and not find a handsomer carriage than this. Mrs. D'Avnoo—Oh, it's handsome enough, but it looks too comfortable to be stylish.

Mrs. Spenders—I wonder how you'd like it if I ever got new-womanish, and insisted upon wearing men's clothes? Mr. Spenders—Oh, I haven't any fear of you ever doing that. Men's clothes are never very expensive.

Mr. Stubb—Yes, Maria, twenty years is supposed to elapse between the third and fourth acts. Mrs. Stubb—Do tell! Then we must certainly stay. Mr. Stubb—Ah, you are interested in the play? Mrs. Stubb—Yes; I want to see the change in the style of hat the heroine wears.

A physician has just announced his somewhat startling discovery that he has succeeded in making the dead heart beat. If the doctor would now discover how to make the dead beat pay, the business men of the country would fall over each other in an effort to erect a suitable monument to his memory.

"Charley, dear," said young Mrs. Torkins, "I had a dream about a racehorse that won three times in succession." "Great Scott," answered her husband, who has a touch of superstition. "What was the name—what did it look like?" "I've done my best to remember, but I can't." "That is the way! There never was a woman who could be relied on to keep her head in business matters!"

One of the old-time conductors on the Louisville and Nash-ville Railroad grew suspicious of a written pass presented regularly by one of his passengers and took it up. He carried it to the office of President Guthrie and said: "A farmer has been riding on this pass for about a year. Do you want him to continue to use y?" President Guthrie put on his glasses, looked the paper over, and said: "Why, this is not a pass. It is a receipt I gave a fellow for a load of wood about a year ago."

THE CHARMING SHOPLIFTER

By KIT CLYDE.

"Well, sir, what is your business?" asked Mr. Tracy, the head of the well-known drygoods firm uptown, as he cocked one of his eyes over the edge of his morning paper and glanced up at me.

"I am sent here by my chief, as I understand you are in need of a little service."

"Ah, yes; I see. I called at headquarters yesterday and requested the superintendent to send me one of his best men. Your name, sir?"

"Tom Fox."

"Well, Mr. Fox, I did not explain the exact nature of the service yesterday that would be demanded of the one we employed. We are acting with caution in the matter. We want a confidential clerk whose duties will consist mainly in exercising an oversight of the small army of clerks in our employ and directing the general business."

"Then you want, in other words, a manager?"

"No, not exactly that; we have a manager. What we want is one who will watch our interests without being confined to any particular counter or floor, and yet who must be known by our other employees in any other capacity than that of a clerk."

"I think I now understand you."

"You are to serve us faithfully, report to the firm what you see is not right or suspicious. Your salary will be satisfactory."

"Then you suspect some of your employees?"

"My answer to that question is—yes and no. The fact is, we have had reason to believe that we have been robbed of many thousand dollars' worth of our finest goods. Valuable packages disappear somehow, and the most vigilant efforts prove futile to detect the thief. I am loath to believe that any one in our employ is guilty. For this reason we want this matter kept as quiet as possible. You are to confide in no one but some member of the firm."

The morning following the above interview found me at my post. Dressed in a simple suit of dark gray, there was nothing in my appearance to distinguish me from the scores of other clerks. Changes in such a large force are so frequent that my presence did not attract more than a momentary notice. The fact that I was to be a sort of general utility clerk of course led to my being rated as no experienced hand in any particular department.

Several days passed by, and I began to feel myself fitting into my work with much more ease than I had anticipated. The house was doing an immense spring business, every floor being crowded with the most fashionable and wealthy people of the city and country. From noon to closing hour the scene resembled that of a popular levee. The elegant toilets of the ladies, with their variegated styles and hues, the incoming and outgoing crowds, the rush of the cash-boys, made up a daily picture of animated humanity worth one's while to go a good distance to look at.

In the midst of such a rush and bustle I could not be ubiquitous; nevertheless, I kept constantly on the move, placing myself behind the counter where there were the most customers to be waited on.

One day I was busy measuring out a piece of silk for a lady who sat just opposite me, when a rather tall, handsome and fashionably dressed lady approached the counter to my right and asked one of the clerks to show her some silks. She seemed to have in her hands some small pieces as samples, and appeared desirous to make comparisons with the goods shown

are many ladies in the city who derive a large income by filling small country orders in this way.

They travel from store to store in search of the very thing wanted, and obtain a commission for their work.

My attention was attracted to this lady, not from anything in her request, but from her personal beauty, her perfect taste in dress, and the easy flow of her conversation. She was a woman that the least observant could not help noticing. I soon decided in my own mind that it was not her intention to purchase any goods, although she continued to carefully scru tinize some of the richest fabrics the store contained. Afte waiting on my own customer, I slipped to another part of the store, still maintaining an unobstructed view of the woman is whom I had become interested; for what reason fully there henot yet been a mental process to explain.

She soon arose from the stool, and had half turned to leave the counter, when she leaned over and handed the clerk a dainty card. He seized it quickly, and thrust it into his pocket, and she moved through the throng toward the door, entered her carriage, and was driven away.

"That was a handsome lady at your counter a few moments since, Mr. Coolbaugh," I quietly remarked to the clerk, who, for the moment, was disengaged.

"Pretty as a picture, isn't she?"

"One of your regular customers, I suppose?"

"Yes; she buys the finest of our goods, and a great deal at that. Her income is large. She's the wife of a China tea merchant. His business is so vast and extensive that most of his time is spent in China. She prefers to reside in New York, and has a handsome residence near the Windsor—"

"Do you know her name?" I broke in, in the most indifferent

"Oh, yes—it's Mrs. Lilian Hunter."

"Did she make any purchases to-day?"

"I should say so. She left her order for several hundreds of dollars' worth of silks of a peculiar design, of which there is not a duplicate in the city—perhaps not in the country. The goods will be delivered this afternoon."

"Did she pay for the goods?" I continued, in a chatty mood. as one clerk with another.

"No; but she is good. She has a fortune in her own name. Besides, Mr. Tracy knows the financial standing of Mr. Hunter, her husband."

Frank Coolbaugh spoke in such an off-hand, honest manner that no one could doubt his statement. He was the best silk salesman in the city, not only on account of his knowledge of the fabrics, but his pleasing address and persuasive arts in inducing his lady customers to purchase.

This meant dollars and cents to his employers, and accordingly his salary was large.

He was always prompt and faithful, with habits, so far as known, exceptionable.

He dressed well, lived well for a young man, but then he could afford to, within reasonable limits, on his comfortable salary. In all his business transactions with the firm-and he had bought for the house in Europe and at home-there had always been the most transparent square-dealing. Not a shadow of suspicion had ever tainted his good name.

It was with great hesitation that I consented to think for a second that there was anything wrong with either Frank or his charming customer; yet I must confess that from the moment my eyes fell on that woman some unexplainable feeling took possession of me that she belonged to that largely increasing class of confidence women who are operating among the most aristocratic circles uptown. That might be true and Frank still be innocent of any connivance with her. I resolved to find out for myself. I watched the preparation of the rooks her for a match suit. This is a very common custom. There for delivery, and when the upper route delivery was ready at

I had seen that a large package marked: "Mrs. Lilian Hunter, No. — 44th St., City," was placed in the wagon, I jumped in. I told the driver I was suffering from headache by too close confinement in the store; that a good ride in the open air would make me feel all right, etc.

On arriving at Forty-fourth street I said to the driver:

"I will deliver the package. You needn't get out."

So I ascended the steps of a brown-stone front and rang the bell. The summons was answered by a swarthy daughter of Africa.

"Is Mrs. Lilian Hunter at home?" I inquired.

"No, sah. She's done gone to de park, an' hain't got back yet. Ef yer hab anything for her I'll take it."

I was about to retrace my steps with the package in my arms, that I might have a pretext to call some other time, but it seemed so foolish in me that I delivered it to the servant, returned to the wagon and the store.

I felt disappointed. If I had been wrong in my suspicions, it is always a relief to know it at once. That I was wrong, so far as I had gone, was proved by the fact that there was such a family living at the number given, and in the neighborhood of the best class of residents in the city.

Still I could not rest.

The next morning I requested the cashier to make out Mrs. Lilian Hunter's bill, and that I would go up and collect it.

I reached the house at an hour when it was not at all likely the lady would have gone out. On ascending the steps I saw that the front door was a little ajar, and I knew that somebody must be in the hall. I did not, therefore, ring. A lady stepped toward the door. I said:

"I would like to see Mrs. Lilian Hunter, who, I believe, resides here."

"That is my name. What is your business?"

"Your name!" I ejaculated, with doubtless some surprise, which the lady appeared to notice.

"Yes, that is my name."

"Do you occupy these premises?"

"Certainly."

The woman had more than passed middle life, and a thought popped into my head.

"Then it may be your daughter whom I wish to see."

"I have no daughter by that name."

I was foiled again.

"Will you please, sir, state the nature of your business?"

"I have a bill to collect for Tracy & Co., to the amount of seventeen hundred dollars, against Mrs. Lilian Hunter. I am quite sure that this is the address, for I left the last package here myself yesterday."

It was now the lady's turn to be surprised. After her partial recovery, she said:

"Sir, there must be some mistake."

"Perhaps so," I replied. "I will go back to the store and see about it."

I did not wish her to think otherwise, for fear the alarm she might give might cause the bird to flutter and fly away. I apologized for the mistake, requested that she say nothing about the matter till I saw her again, particularly not to speak of it to the colored servant-girl.

The game was now clear to my mind. The servant-girl was a stool-pigeon for a bold confidence woman and shoplifter. The arrangement was to have the goods delivered at a certain hour when the real Mrs. Lilian Hunter was out in the afternoon.

But who was this woman? That she was shrewd, bold and handsome could not be gain-said; that she had been successful in her operations must be equally true.

he had been deceived and defrauded by the arts of a handsome woman.

For politic reasons I thought it not best to speak to him about it. I would wait and see. I studied Frank's habits, shadowed him after business hours.

One night I followed him up one of the avenues on the west side; he turned to the left, and passed down a cross street. I quickened my pace to keep up with him. He darted up a flight of steps, and was inside in a second. Before the door was closed I was in the hall, but he had disappeared through the first door in the hall into a front parlor. I heard a mutual affectionate greeting, but could not distinguish the words used very clearly. I knew there was a female in there. Without further waiting I resolved upon a coup d'etat. I knocked at the door; there was a sudden movement and rustle; the door was opened by Frank Coolbaugh.

"Tom Fox!" he exclaimed, starting back; then recovering himself, he continued: "How did you know that I live here? I must have forgotten that I had given you my address. Be seated, Mr. Fox," beckoning with his hand.

I took a chair, and he seated himself in a large open sofachair opposite me. Not to undeceive as to my impression that this was his room, we engaged for a few moments in conversation, but it was evident that he would have been more comfortable if I was absent. The room was luxuriously furnished—the richest, costliest that money could purchase. There was an air of refinement and ease that showed that some person of refined tastes and accomplishments lived there.

But the mystery was what had become of the female whose voice I had certainly heard?

I glanced about the room in a nonchalant manner, without any interruption in the chat, till I saw that Frank was beginning to recover his accustomed self-possession.

But my presence was unbearable to him. At last, changing the run of talk, I said:

"Frank, have you seen Mrs. Lilian Hunter lately?"

"No; she has not been in the store for some days," at length he replied.

"I saw her the other day. I went up to Forty-fourth street to collect a bill, and she appeared at the door."

If a thunderbolt from the sky had suddenly entered the room, the electric shock could scarcely have started him from his seat more quickly than this announcement.

"Yes," I continued, "I saw the real Mrs. Lilian Hunter, and the one so handsome, so fascinating, who bought goods of you, was a confidence woman-"

"Tom Fox, you lie!" he fairly hissed through his teeth, approaching me in an excited manner, as if to use violence.

"Keep cool, Frank. Yes, and that woman is in this house—" "Again I say you lie!"

As the truth of the situation began to flash through his brain, I stepped to the rear of the room, and while attempting to draw aside some heavy damask curtains, I pulled with such vigor that the roller gave way, and it fell with the curtains to the floor, revealing the figure of a female who stood there pale and trembling, and her eyes cast upon the floor.

Poor Frank, amazed, and now conscious of his position, fell back into his chair.

I now knew that the woman was the notorious Flora Pearl, the confidence woman, whom many New Yorkers have reason to remember. I arrested her on the spot. Frank Coolbaugh was subsequently put under arrest, but as it was shown that he had been simply entrapped, his sentence was light.

· The woman is still serving out her time, at the expiration of which, Time will have written such lines upon the face of the once famous beauty that she will never again play the game of Was Frank Coolbaugh an accomplice? Sharper men than Walk into my parlor, says the spider to the fly."

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